Stylistic peculiarities of the fantasy genre  
(based on the novel “A Game of Thrones” by George R.R. Martin)

The article is devoted to the results of the analysis of the stylistic peculiarities of the fantasy genre, based on the novel by G. Martin “A Game of Thrones”. The study was built on the level classification of stylistic devices by I.R. Galperin. The method of continuous sampling was used to identify 860 stylistic units, 70% of which are lexical, 26% are syntactical and 4% are phonetic stylistic devices. Among lexical ones, metaphor showed the highest frequency, among syntactical ones — apoeisis, and alliteration was the largest part of phonetic devices. Based on the study, the author came to the conclusion that almost the entire spectrum of expressive means is used to create a fantasy world, and the prevalence of lexical stylistic devices confirms the opinion that they have the most extensive expressive capabilities in the language.

Keywords: stylistic, lexical, syntactical, phonetic, devices, classification, stylistic units, fantasy genre.

Introduction

Recently, there has been a tendency for the literary works, where the author creates a special world with its own history, culture and people who speak peculiar fictitious languages. This kind of artistic creation belongs to a relatively new literary genre — fantasy. The fantasy novels, which emerged as a subgenre at the beginning of the 20th century, first became the subject of literary and linguistic research only in the second half of the 20th century. For example, in the works of S. Angelskar, E.N. Kovtun, R.I. Kabakov, E.A. Afanasyeva the theoretical features and specific artistic methods of this literary direction were determined. Many linguists rightly point to the use by writers in the texts of their works of special devices, means of expression, which, first of all, should include words that are created by the writers themselves. It is the features of the fantasy language, which are manifested primarily at the lexical and word-formation levels, as well as their functioning in the text, that are the subject of research by many modern linguists. For example, in the works of J. Allan, H.K. Fauskanger, M.T. Hooker, S.A. Gogoleva, T.S. Lazareva, etc. The importance of fantasy fiction is in the reader’s interest. This is confirmed by its constant reissue. Since this genre is young, many problems in this field of literature remain unexplored and require careful study. Despite a significant number of works devoted to the analysis of fantasy as a genre, a number of topical issues, both stylistic and linguistic, are still unresolved. Among the significant research problems is the identification of stylistic peculiarities of fantasy texts. The relevance of this study is justified by insufficient elaboration of the specifics of the fantasy genre, its stylistic devices. And the high popularity of fantasy novels, especially after the film adaptation of the series of novels “A Song of Ice and Fire” by G. Martin, the first of which is “A Game of Thrones”, led to the choice of the work.

Stylistic devices and means are an integral component of any literary work. Accordingly, the text in general and the means of expression, in particular, are subject to the intention of the author of the work. Intensifying emotionality and brightness, as well as arousing the reader’s interest, means of expression are actively used [1; 59]. A literary text contains a wide variety of expressive means, and one of the ways to demonstrate this phenomenon is to operate with stylistic devices and means. Currently, there is no single approach to the classification of stylistic devices and expressive means. However, traditionally, when considering stylistic devices, lexicologists and stylists are based on the most highly respected classifications suggested by such scientists as G. Leech, Yu.M. Skrebnev and I.R. Galperin. The classification of G. Leech is based on the principle of distinguishing between normal and incorrect features of the language of literature [2]. Yu.M. Skrebnev identified paradigmatic and syntagmatic deviations from the lexical and grammatical norms of the language. He does not divide stylistic means into certain layers but divides stylistics into paradigmatic
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and syntagmatic. In addition to phonetic, lexical and syntactical levels, Yu.M. Skrebnev also identifies a semasiological or semantic level [3].

In our work, we took as a basis the level classification proposed by I.R. Galperin. In his classification, the scientist identifies 3 groups: phonetic expressive means (onomatopoeia, alliteration, rhythm, rhyme); lexical expressive means (metaphor, metonymy, irony, antonomasia, epithet, oxymoron, zeugma, idioms, allusions, etc.); syntactical expressive means (stylistic inversion, ellipsis, aposiopesis, rhetorical question, litota, etc.) [4]. Such a classification, undoubtedly, has a number of advantages. Firstly, it takes into account all levels of the language structure. Secondly, the theory is quite clear and systematized, which makes it efficient for use in stylistic analysis of the text.

Materials and methods

The material of the study was the stylistic devices registered in the analysis of “A Game of Thrones” by George R.R. Martin. The research methods were systematization, descriptive method, continuous sampling, quantitative estimation methods, and the method of linguistic and stylistic analysis.

Results and Discussion

By the method of continuous sampling, we identified 860 stylistic units, 601 (70 %) of which are lexical, 227 (26 %) are syntactical and 32 (4 %) are phonetic stylistic units.

The frequency of lexical stylistic means and devices, according to the sample we have made, is presented in Figure 1. According to the pie chart, metaphor, epithet, and comparison are the first in frequency. While such stylistic devices as wordplay and zeugma occur least often. The total number of selected stylistic devices is 15.

Due to the limits in volume the most and the least frequent detected stylistic devices will be presented. To create a fantasy world, to give it and its heroes more imagery, the author uses a metaphor. The frequency is 128 units, that is, 21.3 % of the number of selected lexical stylistic devices.

Metaphor is an integral part among stylistic devices by its capacity and abstract character. George Martin often takes to metaphorical, figurative language to describe the course of the plot, the characters, as well as the accompanying atmosphere.

The title of the novel itself, “A Game of Thrones”, seems to be metaphorical. N.A. Mishankina notes that “various aspects related to the ambiguous interpretation of the phenomenon of the game fall into the fo-
The direct meaning of the noun game is “an action according to the verb to play — to have fun” [6; 628]. Based on the actualization of the conceptual meanings of the game, not only the nature of the plot processes, events, but also the subjects of history are metaphorically characterized and evaluated, which becomes possible on the basis of the actualization of stereotypical knowledge about the typical roles of players, their behavior in gaming activities. The position of the head of state (the head of the throne) is most often interpreted on the basis of attracting the image of a player who sets the rules of the game himself, being its organizer. In the expression “a game of thrones”, a game is understood as “a deliberate series of actions pursuing a specific goal; intrigues, secret plans” [6; 100].

Or, for example, the image of the tree that runs through the entire series of books “A Song of Ice and Fire” symbolizes the ancient gods, who at the time of the novel are almost not worshipped; however, it plays an important role in the plot formation, since it is able to direct the main characters to the goal through dreams, which performs a kind of role of a special place for rituals, and this is expressed by the metaphorical name of an ordinary tree, but having magical power. The presence of such “creatures” is a distinctive feature of the fantasy genre. It is metaphorically called the heart tree.

“The heart tree,” Ned called it. The weirwood’s bark was white as bone, its leaves dark red, like a thousand bloodstained hands. A face had been carved in the trunk of the great tree, its features long and melancholy, the deep-cut eyes red with dried sap and strangely watchful [7; 17].

The epithet has become one of the most beloved and common methods of belles-lettres. This is due to the fact that it provides an infinite number of opportunities to give the work emotionality, imagery, author’s coloring and additional meaning. The well-known literary theorist G.N. Pospelov considered the epithet as the main one among all types of poetic imagery. “A writer can use personifications, symbols, hyperbole and does not use them. He can use tropes or avoid them. But whatever his poetic thought will be, he will never do without epithets. It is impossible to build an imagery without epithets. Epithets denote the properties of the depicted life. It is impossible to depict the phenomena of life without using words that define and shade the features of the depicted” [8; 26].

The analyzed novel is not an exception — the total number of examples of the epithet is 127, which is 21.1 % of the number of the selected lexical stylistic devices. At the same time, we did not divide the examples of epithets into units, since the author rarely uses monosyllabic epithets for these purposes, not always a single epithet (often it is an adjective) gives that complete picture and imagery of the phenomenon or character described, as a whole complex of epithets.

A distinctive feature of the novel is that the author puts the experiences and actions of the characters in the foreground, and this becomes noticeable after the first glance at the contents of the book: the chapters are named after the heroes, and the same events are often viewed from the point of view of different characters. In that way the reader becomes clear about the experiences of each of the listed heroes against the backdrop of the unfolding battle. In addition, the author pays great attention to the description of the thoughts of the characters, often even more than their actions, which allows a deeper understanding of their character.

The epithet is often found in the description of the appearance of the characters. For example, when Jon Snow, the illegitimate son of Eddard Stark, saw the Queen for the first time, he thought admiringly:

She was as beautiful as men said. A jeweled tiara gleamed amidst her long golden hair, its emeralds a perfect match for the green of her eyes [7; 35].

By the long golden hair, Bran recognized the queen when he accidentally spied on her and her brother from the roof of the old tower: Her golden hair swung from side to side as her head moved back and forth, but still he recognized the queen [7; 59].

Martin uses the epithet skillfully while describing the landscape:

The godswood there was a garden, bright and airy, where tall redwoods spread dappled shadows across tinkling streams, birds sang from hidden nests, and the air was spicy with the scent of flowers [7; 17].

Having read this description of the godswood, the reader can feel this spicy air and the fragrance of flowers.

Considering the epithets, one can come to the conclusion that G. Martin does not try to clearly distinguish them into positive or negative: his works are multifaceted, and the same situations are viewed from different angles by different characters. In addition, the storyline, as well as the temper of its characters, undergoes constant changes, often unpredictable, so the emotive-evaluative vocabulary, as a rule, does not have an unambiguous imagery.
Zeugma refers to figures of brevity, as it is formed by shortening: the nuclear word is used only once, but in different senses in relation to dependent ones, which avoids repetition and reduces the construction. Thus, one of the tasks of zeugma is the brevity of statements, which is especially characteristic of the English language, while its main function is expressive. With the help of zeugma, you can convey a wide palette of emotions — from mild humor to satire, from comedy to drama. These properties increase its relevance in literary texts.

So, Eddard Stark’s decision to send his illegitimate son John to the Night Watch was not easy for him: *Summer will end soon enough, and childhood as well* [7; 47].

The reduction of the phrase is evident: the end of the season and the glorious period in the child’s life ends. However, the truth is that the climate of Martin’s world differs from that of the Earth, first of all, by an unusual change of seasons. They are not tied in any way to astronomical years, which in Martin’s world have the same duration as on the Earth. The seasons change with a much lower frequency than on the Earth, and summers and winters change each other in an unpredictable way — summer can last one year or ten. Summer ends — this means that a quiet and peaceful life for all the inhabitants of Westeros ends. The onset of winter is associated with danger: an attack by “wildlings” (people living in the north of the mainland outside the civilized state) or mythical creatures — White Walkers, with whom the Night Watch is fighting. This line is connected with the theme of struggle, in this case, we are talking about the struggle for survival. The boy John ended his childhood with his father’s decision to send him to the Wall. And this means that his life will change dramatically.

The second place in terms of frequency of use is taken by syntactical stylistic devices. In a literary work syntax can perform both a communicative and an aesthetic function, and participates, along with other means and stylistic devices, in the creation of artistic images, in the transfer of attitudes towards fictional reality. Syntactical stylistics deals with the study of the expressive possibilities of word order, types of sentences and syntactical connections.

According to the continuous sampling, 227 cases of the use of syntactical stylistic devices were identified. The frequency of the syntactical stylistic devices we have considered is presented in the diagram (Fig. 2), in the light of which aposiopesis, ellipsis and repetitions are highlighted first in frequency. The least common stylistic devices are litotes and chiasmus. The total number of detected syntactical stylistic devices is 12.

![Figure 2. Frequency of syntactical stylistic devices](image)

Of all the identified syntactical stylistic devices, aposiopesis showed the highest frequency. The total number of examples of aposiopesis was 41 (18 % of the selected syntactical stylistic devices). A stylistic figure, which is a sudden stop that violates the syntactical structure due to the emergence of feelings, confusion...
of the speaker, etc. In “A Game of Thrones”, this stylistic figure is used to convey the emotional mood and feelings of the characters.

The pictorial function of aposiopesis is performed at the stage of primary perception of the text. The recipient gets acquainted with the reality depicted in the text, correlating with it the general social experience he has [9]. Aposiopesis can be attributed to such a means, since it is extremely often used in human speech. Aposiopesis is used while thinking if a person goes into his thoughts without finishing what he has started; in case of unwillingness, fear, rejection to speak on the topic begun; with interruption of the contact with an interlocutor, with excitement, etc.

The scene of John’s farewell, whom his father has sent to the Night’s Watch, with Bran, who is dying, is filled with the highest degree of drama.

“Don’t die, Bran. Please. We’re all waiting for you to wake up. Me and Robb and the girls, everyone…” [7; 66]

Tears choke the hero, words are difficult for him, everything is filled with grief and sadness. Aposiopesis says this, which is expressed graphically with ellipses. Aposiopesis, being a figure of speech, performs the function of empathy, helps the recipient to put himself into the place of the person being depicted.

Were they too late, had the Lannisters reached King’s Landing before her? No, if that were true, Ned would be here too, and surely he would have come to her. How…? [7; 118]

Sympathy and at the same time admiration are caused by the actions of Catelyn, who set off for King’s Landing on a dangerous journey in order to find out who attempted the assassination of her son Bran. She asks herself a lot of questions and tries to answer them. The stream of questions in her head cannot be interrupted. She answers one, as the second and third immediately appear. The rapidity of thoughts is expressed graphically with the ellipses.

Let’s move on to the next most frequent syntactical stylistic device. The number of detected examples of ellipsis was 38 cases (16.7 % of the number of selected syntactical stylistic devices). Ellipsis consists in the deliberate omission of any part of a sentence in the written - literary type of speech. Being appropriate for colloquial speech, ellipsis, even out of a dialogue, gives the narration an intonation of living words, dynamism, and sometimes some simplicity.

The most common is the ellipsis of the verb. The use of elliptical structures by the author in the dialogic speech of the characters makes their remarks more vivid, expressive. By their structure and emotional coloring, utterances acquire the situationality of colloquial speech.

So, for example, when Cersei asked why Eddard Stark left his land, her brother Jaime replied: A hundred reasons. Duty. Honor [7; 58]. The absence of predicates gives this phrase more expression. The nouns here are much more important and meaningful than any verb, as they characterize what is especially important for Lord Stark: “duty” and “honor”.

The same idea can be traced in the following statement. Only this time by Eddard Stark himself: “Would that we could,” Ned said, “but we have duties now, my liege… to the realm, to our children, I to my lady wife and you to your queen” [7; 77]. To the offer of the ruler of the Seven Kingdoms to leave wherever they look, Eddard replies that they now have obligations to the kingdom, children, and wives. The absence of predicates is not only an indicator of everyday oral speech, but also conveys the emotional state of the character.

Chiasmus is the least frequent in the sampling of syntactical stylistic devices. We have identified a single case, which is 0.5 % of the number of detected syntactical stylistic devices. However, this does not diminish the stylistic merit and brightness of this figure.

A feature of chiasm is a kind of crosslike change in the order of the parts of a sentence in two parallel segments of speech.

For example, Arya, known for her daring freedom-loving character, loving weapons and horses and dreaming of going to a duel, asked John why girls needed a coat of arms on their sleeves if they cannot fight. To which John replied: “A wolf with a fish in its mouth?” It made her laugh. “That would look silly. Besides, if a girl can’t fight, why should she have a coat of arms?” John shrugged. Girls get the arms but not the swords. Bastards get the swords but not the arms. I did not make the rules, little sister” [7; 51].

The stylistic function of chiasm is to add new additional content to a statement, drawing attention of a recipient to the reported fact, thus highlighting it. Through John, the author conveys the weight, significance of the statement and thereby draws the reader’s attention to it. For John, the illegitimate son of Eddard Stark, recognition by his family was important, even more important than possession of a sword. The reader can feel a certain bitterness in the words of the character.
The smallest group comprises phonetic stylistic devices. In a prose work, phonetics does not realize itself to the extent that it appears in poetry. But it must be borne in mind that phonetic means of expression still take place in the narrative. Among the phonetic stylistic means, I.R. Galperin distinguishes onomatopoeia, alliteration, rhythm and rhyme in his classification [4; 123]. Rhythm and rhyme are more common for poetic speech. In the novel “A Game of Thrones” such phonetic stylistic means as onomatopoeia and alliteration are most often encountered. According to the continuous sample, 32 cases of phonetic stylistic devices were identified.

The frequency of the considered stylistic devices is presented in the diagram (Fig. 3). The largest group is made up of cases of alliteration, while onomatopoeia is less common.

![Diagram](image)

Figure 3. Frequency of phonetic stylistic devices

We identified 18 cases of alliteration, which accounted for 56% of the total number of selected phonetic stylistic devices.

Alliteration can be seen in newspaper headlines and literary titles such as “Sense and Sensibility”, “Pride and Prejudice”. G. Martin also uses the alliteration in the titles of his works, which are included in the “A Song of Ice and Fire” cycle: the second book of the series is called “A Clash of Kings”, the third is “A Storm of Swords”, and the fifth is “A Dance with Dragons”.

As for the novel “A Game of Thrones” itself, here we can note the use of alliteration in the names or nicknames of characters, the names of important events or places where they unfold. So, for example, the revolution that brought Robert to the throne has an alliterative name: Robert’s Rebellion [7; 81]. The name of the eldest daughter of Eddard Stark, Sansa Stark, is the embodiment of a true lady and even her name is euphonious. The caustic nickname for Lord Petyr Baelish, who was the treasurer of the Royal Small Council, also alliterates — Firstfinger.

One of the most striking features of the novel is the use of fictitious languages by the author. The language, most of the characters in the book speak and in which the books were written, is English. It is called Common Tongue. However, G. Martin wants to make the reader believe in the reality of what is happening and takes an interesting step: the creation of artificial languages. Artificial languages are special languages that, unlike natural ones, are purposefully constructed [10]. They perform the following functions: the function of stylization, which characterizes the function, the function of identification and the creative function. In his blog, the author writes: “A few years ago, I got a very nice email from a reader who wanted to know more about the vocabulary and syntax of High Valyrian. I blush to admit that I had to reply, “Uh... well... all I know about High Valyrian is the seven words I’ve made up to date. When I need an eighth, I’ll make that up too... but I don’t have a whole imaginary language in my desk here, the way Tolkien did.” [11]. The purpose of his languages, or rather, words and syntactic constructions invented by him, is to assure his reader of the reality of the existence of actually fictional peoples and tribes. Some of the languages that have been created have extensive vocabularies, and their grammatical and phonological structures are so carefully designed that long texts can be composed in these languages. The following languages were created by G. Martin in his cycle of novels “A Song of Ice and Fire”: Dothraki, Ancient Giscar, Low Valyrian, High Valyrian, Common, Old, and Scrot. In the first novel of the cycle “A Game of Thrones”, Martin is limited to only a few words, but in the subsequent books of the cycle, artificial languages are actively developed and used by characters.
The analyzed novel mentions several languages spoken by the characters, and two of them are author’s: Valyrian and Dothraki. From a phonetic point of view, the Dothraki language is of particular interest, namely, several phrases in it that are mentioned in the novel. This is the language spoken by a tribe of nomadic horse breeders, for example: “Rakh! Rakh! Rakh haj!” they proclaimed [7; 335]. The use of a special language hints at the peculiarity of the representatives of the clan, their mode of life, traditions and customs. And the sonorous sound r in combination with the alliterative voiceless h speak not only of the strength and masculinity of the people, but also of their certain rudeness. The image of a horse in Dothraki culture is closely related to the concepts of loyalty, honesty, bravery and courage. The Dothraki consider the one who walks on the steppe to be the lowest of the low, having neither honor nor pride, not even a man: khal rhea mhar is a king who has knocked his legs off. Or, for example, the Dothraki people mockingly called Viseris khal rhagat — the cart king [7; 101].

The second most frequent phonetic stylistic device is onomatopoeia (the number of cases is 14, which is 44 %).

As many researchers note, the main function of onomatopoeia is expressive, and in most cases, onomatopoeia is used as an expressive stylistic means of displaying reality to decorate speech, give it liveliness and color [12]. And, as it is known, in literature, the author always strives to convey a certain set of emotions with his work and to evoke a response from the reader or listener. In this regard, onomatopoeia is often used as a stylistic device to convey a complete, colorful picture of the story. Onomatopoeic words are “useful” in a literary work also in that way they not only depict sounds characteristic of objects, or the state of objects, but also express, or name, the feelings of a native speaker, convey his feelings and emotions. Using onomatopoes to describe a phenomenon, we not only implement the denotational component of the created image, but also simultaneously give it an emotional and stylistic coloration that reproduces the emotional state of a character or a narrator, the specifics of living individual speech.

For example, when describing nature, Martin uses onomatopoeia, combining it with the device of comparison, thereby enhancing the effect. A cold wind was blowing out of the north, and it made the trees rustle like living things [7; 4]. Using the verb rustle, the author seems to bring the images to life, and the reader is completely immersed in the story.

A singer was playing the high harp and reciting a ballad, but down at this end of the hall his voice could scarcely be heard above the roar of the fire, the clangor of pewter plates and cups, and the low mutter of a hundred drunken conversations [7; 42]. Due to the onomatopoeic nouns roar and clangor, the reader “hears” the noise of fire and the clanging of cymbals.

In the following example, G. Martin again uses the verb roar, but this time to describe a person’s actions: If I refuse him, he will roar and curse and bluster, and in a week we will laugh about it together [7; 41]. Eddard Stark was tormented by doubts whether to accept the king’s offer to become his right hand, made assumptions about what would happen if he refused (he would growl and swear, but in a week they would remember it with laughter). Here the verb roar has an emotionally expressive function. Onomatopoeia gives expressiveness to speech in comparison with neutral similar words.

Conclusion

Thus, in the novel “A Game of Thrones”, the author uses a variety of lexical stylistic devices to carefully portray the characters, feelings, emotions and their actions, shows their temper, manners and behavior, reveals fully the images of his literary characters, as well as to describe the landscape, general atmosphere of the fantasy world. With the help of these expressive means and devices, the author of the work manages to create vivid and memorable images. Based on the data obtained, we made the following conclusion: the prevalence of lexical stylistic devices in the research material once again confirms the position that it is lexical stylistic devices that have the most extensive expressive capabilities in the language [13].

The analysis of the identified syntactical devices showed that all the stylistic devices used by the author have a single goal: to attract the reader’s attention and express his personal attitude to this phenomenon, subject, character and create a mysterious, mystical atmosphere in the novel.

The smallest group consisted of phonetic stylistic devices. Despite the small number of identified phonetic stylistic units, they add emotions to the text and help to immerse in the fantasy world. And the use of artificial languages in the novel even more emphasizes its belonging to the fantasy genre.

Hence, to create a fantasy world, G. Martin uses almost the entire spectrum of stylistic devices, which makes the novel bright and interesting for the reader.
The results of this work can be useful to researchers engaged in the linguistic analysis of literary texts, as well as the stylistics of the English language.

The prospects for further research are to expand the material and reveal new stylistic devices in the novel “A Game of Thrones” by George R.R. Martin.

References


O.H. Sorokina

Фенети жанрыныц стилистікалық ырекшеліктері
(Дж. Мартиннинің «Тактар ойыны» романы негізінде)
О.Н. Сорокина

Стилистические особенности жанра фэнтези (на примере романа Дж. Мартина «Игра престолов»)

Статья посвящена результатам анализа стилистических особенностей жанра фэнтези, проведенного на материале романа Дж. Мартина «Игра престолов». Для исследования за основу была взята уровневая классификация стилистических приемов И.П. Гальперина. Методом сплошной выборки было выделено 860 стилистических единиц, 70% которых составляют лексические, 26 — синтаксические и 4% — фонетические стилистические приемы. Среди лексических приемов наибольшую частотность показало использование синтаксических — умолчание, а аллитерация составила наибольшую частоту фонетических приемов. На основе проведенного исследования автор пришла к выводу, что для создания фэнтезийного мира необходимо использовать практически весь спектр средств выражательности, а превалирование лексических приемов подтверждает мнение о том, что именно они обладают наиболее обширными выразительными возможностями в языке.

Ключевые слова: стилистические, лексические, синтаксические, фонетические приемы, классификация, стилистические единицы, жанр фэнтези.

References