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abstracts

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“A Cognitive Interpretation of Imagination-Oriented Deixis: A Case of Poetry”

One of the prominent linguistic terms for future cognitive studies of literary texts is deixis. The word is originated from Ancient Greek and literally means “pointing out.” Deictic words (or deictics) require contextual information to convey any meaning, they not just show us who, when and where speaks (personal, temporal and spatial deixis), but also may have a meaning which considers the social and reciprocal role of the referent. Those aspects of deixis were widely discussed last decades by leading scholars in cognitive literary studies, from Peter Stockwell (2002) who implemented deictic shift theory to cognitive poetic analyses, to Reuven Tsur (2008) who argued with Stockwell and proposed important remarks on deixis and orientation in poetry. Less known kind of deixis, yet valuable for future research, was introduced by German linguist Karl Bühler (1934) as “deixis am phantasma” or imagination-oriented deixis. In this case the deictic signs refer to absent (mental) objects. The central question from a psychological point of view, as Bühler remarks, is “how it is possible to guide and be guided when oriented on something absent.” In my paper I will focus on this particular kind of deixis and its interplay with metaphor. I will show on examples from poems by Joseph Brodsky, Anna Akhmatova, and Robert Frost how imagination-oriented deixis determines different levels of a reader’s access to the meaning of a whole poem or its particular part, depending on her Theory of Mind capacity, familiarity with core conceptual metaphors and experience as a poetry reader.

bio

Denis Akhapkin is a professor in Smolny Faculty of Liberal Arts and Sciences at Saint-Petersburg State University where he also directs the Centre for Writing and Critical Thinking and is responsible for the core curriculum; in 2012-2016 he served as the Smolny’s deputy dean for education. His research interests include modern Russian literature with an emphasis on poetry and poetics, literary linguistics and cognitive literature studies. He was a visiting research fellow at Helsinki University Collegium (2007) and The Princess Dashkova Russian Centre, University of Edinburgh (2014). Denis is an associate international member of the Institute for Writing and Thinking, Bard College (USA).

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“Fictional Minds and Personification: An Empirical Study on Voices, Characters, and Crossing of Experiences”

Readers often describe particularly vivid experiences of voices and characters in a manner that has been likened to hallucination. Little is known, however, of how