

DOI 10.31558/1815-3070.2021.41.25
UDK 811.111+81'342:028.46**INTERACTION OF SEGMENTAL AND SUPRASEGMENTAL MEANS IN REALIZING
THE ENGLISH FOLK TEXT PRAGMATIC ORIENTATION**

Статтю присвячено розгляду специфіки взаємодії сегментних та надсегментних засобів оформлення англійських фольклорних текстів малої форми, яка слугує реалізації їхньої прагматичної спрямованості, а також здатна здійснювати сугестивний вплив на слухача. За результатами аудитивного аналізу озвучених казок, загадок, байок і притч уставлено, що концентрація в них слів з однаковими звуками і звукосполученнями, інтенсифікованими паралелізмом інтонаційних моделей і ритмічних структур суміжних інтоногруп у поєднанні зі спадними тонами з однаковою швидкістю зміни напрямку їхнього руху, приблизно однаковою тривалістю пауз, наявністю спеціального підйому або паузи перед ключовим словом та/або його оформленням високим спадним кінетичним тоном висхідно-спадної конфігурації, слугує, з одного боку, реалізації прагматичної спрямованості текстів (схвалення і заохочення чеснот та засудження і висміювання вад), та, з іншого – забезпечує сугестивне транслявання їхнього дидактичного змісту.

Ключові слова: фольклорний текст малої форми, звукосимволізм, просодичні засоби, прагматична спрямованість, сугестивний потенціал.

Introduction

It is common knowledge that the current stage of phonetic studies is characterized by its interdisciplinary direction, which necessitates consideration of the research data obtained by adjacent disciplines, primarily, in the sphere of psychology regarding, in particular, the specificities of expressing the speaker's intentions, realization of the subliminal message in the course of communication, correlation of the text semantics, pragmatic orientation and its phonetics structure, etc. Considering this, one of the problems elaborated by the Kyiv School of Phonetics within the scope of speech energetics theory (Kalyta 2015) is a relationship between pragmatic orientations of various speech segments and their segmental and prosodic organization whose complex interaction conveys the subliminal message.

With this in mind, the **objective** of the present study is to trace the correlation between the text pragmatic loading, its intonation organization and sound symbolic features of the text segmental units able to produce the subliminal stimuli on the recipient.

Methodological background of the research

As is known, the functioning of the system of phonetic means and regularities of their interaction in oral speech have been in focus of many researchers since the time of Aristotle and Plato. Due to this, there have been formed definite views on the role of intonation in oral communication. In particular, it has been confirmed by numerous studies that the pragmatic aim of a spoken text is primarily achieved by certain prosodic contours accompanying sets of segmental units having a symbolic nature. Considering these views, we have performed the study of the text oral actualization from the standpoint of a communicative pragmatic approach, which allows identifying the correlation between the text pragmatic loading and the interaction of its segmental and suprasegmental levels while conveying the text suggestive message.

We believe that English folk texts of different genres traditionally viewed as frequently used compositions of a didactic orientation can serve as a highly productive material of our research since they are all traditionally considered to be one of the most effective educational texts of a concise form that express "high concentration of feelings and actions" (Bascom 1965: 281).

Besides, other characteristic properties of such texts, according to (Plotnikova 2004: 4), comprise a generalized laconic presentation of facts, presence of a traditional scope of characters and motifs, overall allegorical meaning, humorous or satirical coloring, and unexpected witty ending. Other scholars, among specific features of small form folk texts, name a high potential of their symbolism, simplified composition, uncomplicated means of imagery creation, conciseness of the text spatial and temporal organization, typical syntactic constructions, linear orientation of the development of the events, laconicism of the ending, tight intertwining of factual and conceptual information (Shpetniy 1980: 4–10), conciseness, conversational orientation, use of simple syntactic constructions (Lushnikova, Potapova 2011: 192) and the like.

Numerous linguistic and folklore studies convincingly prove that the conceptual space of folk texts being a fundamental component of the humanity spiritual culture, has always served as a systemic didactic instrument. Their ideas keep on providing a rational orientation of individuals as to their behaviour in the society they live in and in terms of the universe perception.

Thus, we have all the grounds to define a *small folklore text* as a prosaic folk composition characterized by its lapidary style, i.e. compactness of expressive means, absence of redundant information, and simplicity of composition as well as a high concentration of pragmatic loading, i.e. ability to realize both the didactic and subliminal-suggestive functions.

To meet the objectives stipulated in this paper we are to fulfil the following *research steps*: to generalize pragmatic orientation of English small form folk texts; to analyse the sound symbolic potential of the texts under study; to explain the correlation of pragmatic orientation of folk texts and their segmental and supra-segmental organisation.

Results and Discussion

At the initial stage of our study, having analyzed all the lingual features of each of the small form folk genre, we arrived at a conclusion (Taranenko 2014) that all of them perform a didactic function. Within our deeper study of the folk text functional loading we got the reason to state that according to their pragmatic orientation, the small folk texts can be grouped into three enlarged classes, namely: spiritual-and-ideological (myths, legends), cultural-and-household (proverbs, fairy tales), and creative-and-teaching (riddles, anecdotes, parables) texts.

The next step of our research presupposed solving the problem of linking a certain text pragmatic orientation with its phonetic actualization in the process of oral communication. To reach this goal, we have performed lingual and auditory analyses of various folk genres that amounted to 780 texts (Book of Mathew; Bryant 2007; Graves 1993; Jacobs 1890).

Lingual semantic analysis demonstrated that irrespective of the text content, all small form folk texts convey only two possible semantic invariant ideas: either approval of wisdom and encouragement of virtues (i.e., a positive ethical idea) or condemning and ridiculing deviations from the norms of morality and behavior (i.e., a negative ethical idea).

It is worth mentioning that in the course of our further semantic analysis of folklore texts, we systematized them according to the frequency of the actualized positive or negative types of their ethical idea as follows: texts conveying condemnation of deviations from the norms of morality and behavior comprise 69,1% (namely, inconsiderate deeds – 7,2%, foolishness – 4,3%, greediness – 2,9%, envy – 2,9%, lies – 2,5%, malice – 2,4%, etc.), while the idea of approval of wisdom or encouragement of prudence or virtues is typical only of 30,9% of the analyzed texts (in particular: wisdom – 10,1%, prudence – 5,8%, diligence – 1,44%, etc.). As we can see, the texts communicating the ethical idea of condemning deviations from moral norms dominate and make up 69,1% of their total number, while those text that approve and encourage wisdom and prudence comprise only 30,9%. From the standpoint of the didactic function as the basic function of folk texts, this is quite reasonable since the prevention of deviations from the norms of morality and behavior is always more important than the approval of wisdom or prudence.

At the next stage of our research we performed the auditory analysis of the folk texts under study grouped according to the stipulated above pragmatic orientation. The auditory analysis was conducted by professional phoneticians whose task was aimed at finding out the correlation between

the sound symbolic phonostemes of the folk text fragments having definite prosodic organization and their pragmatic orientation.

Thus, the analysis ascertains that the leading role in realizing the folk text pragmatic aim at the segmental level can be attributed to sound parallelism, namely: alliteration, assonance, repetition of certain sound clusters. According to the experts in phonetics, the repeated occurrence of identical consonants or vowels as well as sound combinations within the folk text structure serves to emphasize and strengthen positive or negative connotations and shades of meaning of the words, evoking in the listener certain associations related to the text pragmatics and / or its general didactic idea realization. These findings can be supported to some extent by conclusions made by Margaret Magnus (Magnus 2001), who stated that the words having the same consonants or consonantal clusters within their structure that repetitively occur within a certain context, contribute to the emergence of certain images, symbols or associations in the listener's mind. Through these associations, the words having the same consonants or their clusters get linked by the listener into a single thematic field or a group of words that add to producing the text subliminal influence.

The mentioned associative linkage of words with identical consonants into a certain semantic block can be exemplified by a frequent repetition of the consonant /r/ or sound cluster /C + r/ within fables that actualize a negative ethical idea and are pragmatically oriented at ridiculing violations from morality and behavior or condemnation and disgust of ill manners (Handford 1964): *drink, spring, quarreling, provoked, breath, friends, crows, strife* (ibid: 21); *spring, drinking, proud, great, strength, ground, country, branches, tree, preservation, trust, betray* (ibid: 67); *brought, presents, bring, crawled, rose, creatures, frightening* (ibid: 56), etc.

The used phonosemantic technique is considered by phoneticians as a means of reinforcing the general negative connotation of the whole folk text.

The repetition of sibilants /s/, /z/, /θ/, /ð/, /ʃ/, /ʒ/, affricates /tʃ/, /dʒ/, the sonorant /r/ or the combination of /C + r/ in texts whose pragmatic aim is ridiculing violations of norms of morality can serve as another example of associative combination of words. Such a repetition also serves as a means of highlighting a negative connotation of the whole folk text as well as produces a corresponding subliminal effect on the listener: *pious, worshipper, goose, eggs, impatient, bird's inside, solid, haste, disappointed, flesh, grasping* (ibid: 182); *thirsty, stag, spring, noticed, reflection, curiously fashioned, dissatisfied with his slender legs, still lost in thought, easily outdistanced, safely, reached, branches, alas, such confidence, destroying, danger, saviours, implicit trust* (ibid: 67); *ass, crossing, salt, lost, slipped, dissolved, pleased, next, purpose, sponges, absorbed, surprise, scheming disaster* (ibid: 106); *some serpent's eggs, which she hatched, sitting, swallow, watched, creatures, savage, nature* (ibid: 89); *tortoise, asked, teach, nature, importuned, dashed to pieces, spirit, disregard, advice, wiser heads, results* (ibid: 69); *fox, slipped, fence, save, clutched, brier-bush, thorns, worse, mistake, incident, nature* (ibid: 6); *horse, grazing, spoiling the grass, sought, huntsman, consent, manger, revenged* (ibid: 96), etc. Since the times of ancient rhetoric (Freidenberg 1936: 238) such consonants and their clusters have been viewed as ear-irritating sounds as well as those that have a negative aesthetic impact on the listener.

On the other hand, in texts that communicate a positive ethical idea, i.e. whose pragmatic content is aimed at praising and encouraging virtues and reasonable actions, a symbolic value is rendered by assonance, i.e. the repetition of vowels of the same row (/aɪ/, /eɪ/, /i:/ or /ɔ:/, /ɑ:/), e.g.:

/aɪ/, /eɪ/, /i:/ – *sleeping, lion, waking, seized, minded, eat, released, repay, means, saving, life, tied, tree, freed, day, kindness, see, mice, grateful, make, need, weaker* (Handford 1964: 43);

/aɪ/, /ɑ:/, /ɔ:/ – *dying, farmer, hard, all, life, before, want, died, called, father* (ibid: 176);

/ɒ/, /ɔ:/, /ɑ:/ – *hot, boar, small, started, quarrelling, mortal, combat, stopping, saw, stop, quarrel* (Handford 1964: 23), etc.

Similarly, within the folk texts that convey a positive ethical idea, the repetition of sonorants /m/, /n/, /l/, /w/ within adjacent fragments is also recognized as a frequent means of creating sound parallelism and thus as a means of producing the general pragmatic aim of the text, for example:

/w/ – *wanted, with water, wondered what, water* (ibid: 80);

/m/, /n/, /l/, /w/ – *ant, went, water, fell in, and, danger, must, leaf, like a little, climbed, thank you, called, will help, man, came along, leg, made, jump, missed, flew away, danger* (ibid: 141); *one, went, play, near, some, lived, home, one, come on, lets make them jump, water, will be fun, all looked, little, what, not like, floating leaf, in front, stones thrown, people, not like done* (ibid: 46);

/m/, /n/, /l/, /w/, /r/ – *amaranth, grew, rose, lovely, desirable, men, felicitate, fragrance, my life, replied, wither, continue, bloom, remain always, fresh, now, content with little and live long, spell, luxury, misfortune* (ibid: 146).

Thus, it was revealed that a repetitive occurrence of identical vowels and consonants and/or their clusters evokes in the listener certain associations, related to the text pragmatic aim and its emotional coloring.

It should also be mentioned that, according to the results of the auditory analysis, the strongest degree of the text pragmatic potential actualization was registered in those cases when the words having sound parallelism were marked at the suprasegmental level with a nuclear tone or pitch maximum, for example:

In their \greed for \more, | \grasping / people | -often \throw away what they \have already || (ibid: 182);

An \ass | \crossing a \river § with a \load of \salt | \lost his \footing § and \slipped into the \water, | so that the \salt was dis \solved || (ibid: 110);

\Waking up, | the \lion \seized it | and was \minded to \eat it || (ibid: 43);

\Sensible \men § \learn \wisdom | from their \neighbour's \misad\ventures || (ibid: 136);

...and \moved by com\passion | he \picked it \up § and \put it in his \bosom || (ibid: 57);

\Gradually § they \came to \realize § that it was in \capable of \anger || (ibid: 210) тощо.

The presented interaction of segmental and suprasegmental means of the fable has a significant functional loading since it intensifies the keywords of the text, perceived by the listener as its semantic centers.

Similarly, segmental and prosodic organization of parables, like of any other small form folk text, also largely depends on their pragmatic orientation as well as on the positive or negative connotation of their lexical units, as in the example below:

“Gather ye to\gether ↑first the \tares, § and \bind them in \bundles § to \burn them, | but \gather the \wheat § into my \barn.” || (Matthew 13: 24–30).

In this fragment, the key words are *wheat* and *tares*, which represent, correspondingly, the good and the evil, so the prosodic level contributes to their emphasis in the text as opposing units. Thus, within this fragment we can trace the actualization of the contrasting nuclear tones: a low rising nuclear tone of a narrow range on the word *tares* and a high falling tone of a wide range on the word *wheat*.

As it was demonstrated above, the expression of semantic polarity of the described allegorical images is usually enhanced by the interaction of segmental and suprasegmental means, e.g:

‘\Sir, § \didst •not thou \sow ↑good \seed in thy •field? | From \whence § then \hath •come the \tares?’ || (Matthew 13: 24–30).

In this example there is a vivid phonosemantic contrast of the words *seed* /si:d/ and *tares* /təəz/ since the vowels in their structure are opposed as those that are traditionally perceived as pleasant (/i:/) and, accordingly, as off-putting (/ə/), which consequently highlight positive and negative connotations of these words thus evoking in the listener certain associations connected with positive and negative images depicted in the parable. Moreover, a semantic contrast acquires a focal point in those cases when sound-symbolic words get prominence by emphatic prosodic means. For instance, in the fragment given above, the word *seed* pronounced with a rising nuclear tone is opposed to the word *tares* marked by a wide falling tone, which passes through all voice pitch zones and a slowed down rate of its movement, thus expressing the speaker's negative attitude to the depicted phenomenon.

We should point out that due to such a phonetic arrangement of the contrasted words *seed* and *tares* the predicate of the sentence *come* loses its semantic significance. Therefore, the interaction of the units of segmental and suprasegmental levels can be considered as a means of intensifying semantic centers of the parable, enhancing its rhythmicity as well as creating a positive or negative allegorical image of the whole text.

Concerning the phonetic organization of a riddle as a frequently used folk text of a creative nature it should be mentioned that it is primarily connected with the riddle structure. According to the results of our previous studies (Taranenko 2016), a characteristic feature of a folk riddle is its division into two parts, namely: the content of a riddle, which contains the object description, or the referent, and the riddle solution, formed in the recipient's mind as a result of perceiving the text segmental and suprasegmental means' interaction that triggers creative and cognitive processes aimed at searching for the riddle solution.

Thus, we can state that the riddle phonetic organization largely depends on the speaker's assessment of the riddle referent which causes a corresponding change in his/her emotional state while pronouncing the riddle out loud and affects the general polarity (i.e. positive/negative) of the text emotional loading. We will illustrate this idea by giving an example of the riddle about the coffin as the object of its description:

The \man who \made it § did \not \want it; |

The \man who \bought it § did \not \use it; |

The \man who \used it § did \not \know it || (coffin) (Bryant 2007: 104).

The auditory analysis of the given example allows us to conclude that the speaker's emotional state, influenced by the ethical assessment of the riddle object, or referent, in this case the coffin, generates a definite pattern of the text prosodic organization: identical intonation patterns of all riddle syntagms, their regular rhythmic organization, pitch variations of falling tones on all the verbs of the text, mid or widened negative pitch interval at the juncture "nucleus-tail" (e.g.: *\made it*, *\bought it*, *\used it*). Such a prosodic highlighting of the riddle attracts the listener's attention to each verb of the text, perceived as powerful emotional concepts that trigger the search for a suitable image in the recipient's mental sphere as the answer to the riddle.

The negative emotional appraisal of the riddle referent can also be intensified by segmental means (alliteration, assonance, repetition of sound clusters) accompanied at the suprasegmental level by identical intonation contours of adjacent intonation groups, for instance:

\Brass \cap § and \wooden \head, |

\Spits \fire § and \spews \lead || (gun) (ibid.: 98).

We can see that in this example the negative metaphorical image of the weapon is enhanced by the repetition of ear-irritating word-initial phonostemes *br-* and *sp-*, which usually have a negative aesthetic effect on the listener. In our opinion, the recurrence of the same or identical consonants and their clusters within a riddle helps convey the connotative meaning of its lexical units, evoking in the listener certain images and associations connected with emotional polarity of the riddle and its pragmatic orientation. The performed analysis enables us to state that the interplay of segmental and suprasegmental means of the spoken riddle is influenced by positive / negative connotation of the riddle referent. This very interaction, in its turn, helps the recipient search for a correct riddle solution. The results also show that the strongest subliminal stimulus of the text is achieved when sound symbolism is intensified by prosodic means.

Conclusions

As a result of the carried out auditory analysis of fairy tales, riddles, fables, and parables we made a conclusion that concentration of certain sound clusters in them directly correlates with the text pragmatic orientation: praising and encouraging virtues (a positive idea) or blaming and ridiculing faults (a negative idea).

The interplay of segmental and suprasegmental means of the folk text organization has a significant functional loading. On the one hand, it emphasizes semantic centers of the text, giving them

special expressiveness and, on the other hand, enhances the folk text rhythmicity and intensifies its keywords, perceived as semantically linked lexical units thus communicating the suggestive subliminal influence on the listener.

The performed auditory analysis of folk texts, gives us every reason to qualify the following prosodic means as the invariant ones that ensure the text suggestive subliminal effect, namely: isochronous pronunciation of the adjacent intonation groups due to their identical intonation patterns and rhythmic structures; the identical number of rhythmic groups in the adjacent intonation groups; prevalence of short intonation groups; highlighting of a keyword by a high falling kinetic tone having an upward-downward configuration. Besides, the repeated appearance in folk texts of identical sounds and sound combinations enhance the general connotative loading of the words, evoking in the recipient's mind certain associations connected with the text pragmatic orientation.

All in all, since folklore texts are not characterized by the variety of lexical-grammatical and stylistic means, their suggestive subliminal potential is realized by certain prosodic patterns, aimed at activating cognitive processes in the recipient's psyche.

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INTERACTION OF SEGMENTAL AND SUPRASEGMENTAL MEANS IN REALIZING THE ENGLISH FOLK TEXT PRAGMATIC ORIENTATION

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Abstract

Background: The paper is a study of the interplay of segmental and suprasegmental means of the folk text organization that serves the realization of the text pragmatic orientation as well as producing the suggestive subliminal stimuli on the recipient.

Purpose: The objectives of the research is to trace the correlation between the text pragmatic loading, its intonation organization and sound symbolic features of the text segmental units able to communicate a subliminal message to the text recipient.

Results: As a result of the auditory analysis of fairy tales, riddles, fables, and parables the author makes a conclusion that concentration of certain identical sounds and sound clusters in them highlighted by falling kinetic tones of an upward-downward configuration, directly correlates with the text pragmatic orientation, namely: praising and encouraging virtues (a positive idea) or blaming and ridiculing faults (a negative idea).

Discussion: Since folklore texts are not characterized by the variety of lexical-grammatical and stylistic means, their suggestive subliminal potential is realized by certain prosodic and sound symbolic patterns, aimed at activating cognitive processes in the recipient’s psyche.

Key words: small form folk texts, sound symbolism, prosodic means, pragmatic orientation, suggestive subliminal effect.

Vitae

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