

## LITERATUROZNAWSTWO I KULTUROZNAWSTWO

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### THE ANTHROPOCENTRISM OF THE PROCESS OF LITERARY COMMUNICATION AS DISCURSIVE ACTIVITY<sup>1</sup>

In the postmodern era, the following assumption has been made: a literary text exists independently of its author, while its meaning is shaped by the reader. This thought is often associated with R. Barthes, who describes the role of the author in the following manner:

The removal of the Author (one could talk here with Brecht of a veritable ‘distancing’, the Author diminishing like a figurine at the far end of the literary stage) is not merely an historical fact or an act of writing; it utterly transforms the modern text (or – which is the same thing – the text is henceforth made and read in such a way that at all its levels the Author is absent) (Barthes, 1977, p. 145).

Conversely, when it comes to the reader and the role played by him or her in the process of literary communication, R. Barthes maintains that

The reader is the space on which all the quotations that make up a writing are inscribed without any of them being lost; a text’s unity lies not in its origin but in its destination. Yet this destination cannot any longer be personal: the reader is without history, biography,

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<sup>1</sup> Niniejszy artykuł posłużył mi jako podstawa do napisania fragmentów pierwszego rozdziału pracy doktorskiej pt. Postaci dyskursu w perspektywie tworzenia i tłumaczenia „poetonomów”. Na podstawie polskiego i rosyjskiego przekładu sagi o Harrym Potterze.

psychology; he is simply that someone who holds together in a single field all the traces by which the written text is constituted (Barthes, 1977, p. 148).

Thus, the reader, being the destination in the process of literary communication, is supposed to become a vessel within which all these traces are shaped into one entity. Nonetheless, one should bear in mind the fact that the verbal form in which authors' thoughts are materialized stems specifically from their own decisions that they make on the basis of their life experience, world view and perception of reality. Apart from this, readers cannot be deprived of their individuality that heavily influences the consequent understanding of a literary text. Taking both of these perspectives into consideration, one can postulate that the meaning of a literary text is in the state of ongoing negotiation between writers and readers. It is rooted in the psychological aspect of human existence that is encapsulated in the term *discourse*, being directly related to the cognitive-pragmatic perspective in linguistics (Алефиренко, 2014, p. 16). However, it is worth mentioning that there is a general problem of defining discourse, which has been pinpointed by J. Szacki:

[...] słowo dyskurs zrobiło we współczesnej humanistyce oszałamiającą karierę i coraz trudniej o pewność, czy w ogóle jeszcze cokolwiek znaczy, używa się go bowiem na wiele różnych sposobów, a całkiem nierzadko po prostu jako uczonego określenia dowolnej dłuższej wypowiedzi lub dowolnego tekstu (Szacki, 2005, p. 905).

(the word discourse has made an astonishing career in modern humanities and it becomes more and more uncertain if it means anything at all, as it is being used in a number of different ways, pretty often simply as an eloquent way of naming any longer speech or any text).<sup>2</sup>

Therefore, the aim of this paper is to analyse the relation between the cognitive-pragmatic understanding of discourse and the anthropocentrism of the process of literary communication, determine and describe its core constituents, as well as define the stages of the process of discursive creation of literary texts. The author of this paper assumes that discourse can be defined as the mental space of each of the participants of the process of literary communication within which literary concepts are created and shaped – eventually grouping into an entire conceptsphere – being the mental representation of a literary text. Apart from this, the fact that the process is anthropocentric should be understood as follows: writers and readers are the indispensable subjects of literary communication because of whom the physical and mental being of literary texts is possible. On the one hand, people create literary texts through and due to their creative process, while, on the other hand, people bring liter-

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2 All of the translations in square brackets are made by the author of the present paper.

ary texts to life through the process of interacting with them. This means that without writers and readers it would be impossible for literary texts to exist both as verbal objects and as imagined entities.

T. van Dijk is usually associated with the school of thought currently named as “critical discourse studies” within which the process of discourse is examined, although its actual pioneers are R. Wodak and N. Fairclough who have called it “critical discourse analysis”. Interestingly enough, T. van Dijk explicitly admits that the understanding of discourse is as blurry as the definitions of the following terms: language, communication, society and ideology (van Dijk, 1998, p. 194). In spite of this, with a view to clarifying the problem of using and interpreting the term, he distinguishes two contrasting meanings of discourse. The first one is *extended*, which T. van Dijk considers as the proper one – from this perspective, discourse is interpreted as a complex *communicative event* that is composed of its participants, context, co-text and co-situation. Such a view on discourse allows to maintain that not only understanding of spoken and written messages depends on and stems from these aspects (van Dijk, 1998, p. 194), but also, being a crucial fact, that discourse is solely procedural at its core. The second meaning is *restricted* – it boils down to defining discourse as a verbal product, thus being spoken or written words. By means of this, communication becomes deprived of its extralinguistic context, so this transforms it into an equivalent of a linear string of words (van Dijk, 1998, p. 194).

These two definitions of discourse are parallel to the distinction between *parole* and *langue* (van Dijk, 1998, p. 194). The extended meaning of discourse focalizes one’s attention on language use in a particular situation by a particular person, while the restricted meaning is concerned with the abstract system of language beyond its pragmatic context. In other words, the origins of the former unity “parole-communicative event” can be traced in pragmatic and cognitive linguistics, while those of the latter unity “langue-verbal product” – in structural linguistics.

If one defines discourse as a communicative event, then it is governed by the underlying mental models that should be perceived as the mutual knowledge that allows its participants to understand each other. This can be ascribed to the fact that communication is possible when the interlocutors share the opinion of what information, in what way and in what circumstances can be said or written (van Dijk, 2006, p. 172). It leads to constant balancing between subjectivity and intersubjectivity, while the degree to which one or the other prevails is determined by the type of situation the participants find themselves in. In fact, a similarity to H.P. Grice’s conversational maxims of quality, quantity, relation and manner (Grice, 1975, p. 45) can be spotted in this tendency. Abiding by such rules often leads to succeeding in exerting speakers’ intended effects on the receivers of their message, although these rules may not be explicitly stated, but only implicitly assumed. The existence of such mental models makes it possible to believe that spoken or written words are only “the tip of the ice-

berg” of the multilayered process of communication. Because of this, the interpretation of one’s message that is consistent with his or her actual intentions is conditioned by taking all of these layers into consideration.

In fact, T. van Dijk’s definition of discourse constitutes a basis of one of its Polish definitions developed by J. Bartmiński and W. Chlebda who believe that:

Cały tok przeprowadzonego przez nas wywodu wskazuje jednak, że najbliższe jest nam nawiązujące do koncepcji Theuna van Dijka rozumienie dyskursu jako zdarzenia komunikacyjnego, które dokonuje się (zachodzi) w określonej wspólnotcie, w określonej sytuacji, wedle określonego scenariusza (strategii, zespołu reguł) i w określonym celu, realizując się poprzez utrwalone konwencje gatunkowe, stylowe i *stricte* językowe (werbalne, w szerszym ujęciu – znakowe) (Bartmiński, Chlebda, 2013, s. 91).

(Yet, the disquisition that we have launched into seems to indicate that we agree the most with the idea of Theun van Dijk that entails understanding discourse as a communicative event that takes place (unfolds) in a particular community, in a particular situation, according to a particular script (strategies, a set of rules) and for a particular reason, being realised through established conventions of genre, style and *stricte* language (verbal, in a wider perspective – semiotic.)

Having considered this passage, one can assume that the process of communication and its verbal product are rooted in the knowledge of the participants of a communicative event which originates from all of its pragmatic components. Still, it should be noted that this perspective does not involve perceiving knowledge as an ideologically underpinned entity.

Taking into consideration the process of literary communication by means of a literary text requires one to resort to the cognitive-pragmatic interpretation of discourse – it has been developed and popularised in Russian scientific publications by N.F. Alefirienko who has tied it to literary theory. It is heavily influenced by the understanding of discourse postulated by T. van Dijk, yet it mainly focuses on the role played by the participants of the process of literary communication. In his understanding, the phenomenon of discourse becomes individualised, since each participant of this process is considered as an actant who has an equivalent influence on the meaning of the text during its creation and interpretation. N.F. Alefirienko asserts that the general understanding of discourse gradually evolves towards the communicative-cognitive one, as:

[...] всё более устойчивым становится определение дискурса как сложного коммуникативно-когнитивного явления, в состав которого входит не только сам текст, но и различные экстралингвистические факторы (знание мира, мнения, ценностные установки), играющие важную роль для понимания и восприятия информации (Алефиренко, Голованева, Озерова, Чумак-Жунь, 2013. р. 15).

(it becomes more and more common to define discourse as a complex communicative-cognitive phenomenon that is constituted not only by a text itself, but also by various extralinguistic factors (knowledge of the world, opinions, axiological standpoints) that play a vital role in understanding and receiving information.)

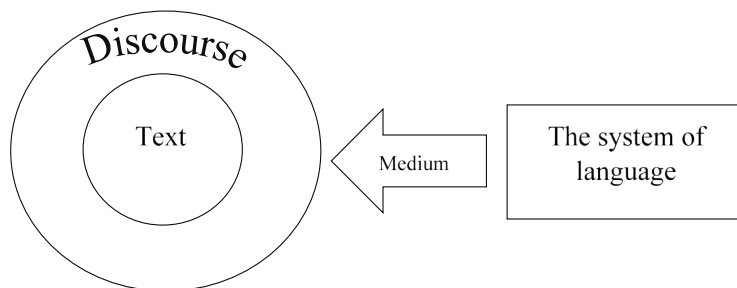
In another paper, he advances a definition of discourse in relation to a literary text, being therefore consistent with the school of cognitive linguapoetics that he has established:

В когнитивной лингвопоэтике дискурс понимается как речемыслительное образование событийного характера, природа которого обуславливается совокупностью коммуникативно-прагматических, социокультурных, психологических, паралингвистических и других факторов (Алефиренко, 2011, р. 5–6).

(In cognitive linguapoetics, discourse is understood as a verbal-mental entity similar to an event, the nature of which is conditioned by a set of communicative-pragmatic, sociocultural, psychological, extralinguistic and other factors.)

In this context, discourse encompasses the totality of verbal and mental processes under the influence of which the subjects of literary communication create and interpret literary texts. In other words, discourse is a space of not only their personal life experiences, attitudes towards reality and communicative intentions. It also includes the results of the activity of authors' or readers' imagination – the literary conceptosphere, the dynamic interrelation between the structure of a text and their discursive space, as well as the totality of the cognitive, pragmatic and emotional background of the process.

Consequently, a literary text can be defined as either a linear form of verbalisation of a multilayered discursive space of the verbal-mental activity attributed to the author, or as a verbal stimulus that triggers discursive activity in the mind of the reader (Алефиренко, 2011, р. 5–6). This interconnection between a literary text and discourse is depicted in the following scheme created by N.F. Alefrienko (Алефиренко, 2011, s. 9). It can be seen that discourse is simultaneously a process, environment and condition of generating a literary text, which is thus the form of its materialisation – the verbal product. In turn, the system of language is the main source of signs by means of which one's discursive activity can be expressed. However, it is worth highlighting that human psychology is of no less importance, yet it is not objectively tangible due to not being codified.



**Scheme 1.** A text in relation to discourse and the system of language

Source: Алефиренко (2011), p. 9.

In their theoretical and practical analyses the representatives of the cognitive-pragmatic paradigm are concerned with the anthropocentric nature of literary communication. Indeed, they purport that a human being is the necessary condition of “bringing a literary text to life” – this hypothesis embodies the core of its being anthropocentric. Bearing this in mind, one can affirm that it is crucial to understand a literary text not only as a fusion of its verbal and semantic aspects, but also, or even primarily, as an effect of the cooperation of the implicit mechanisms of verbal-mental activity of the subjects – authors or readers (Алефиренко, 2011, p. 9). As noted by N.F. Alefirienko,

[...] для когнитивно-прагматической лингвистики в центре внимания оказывается не только язык в неразрывном сопряжении его формы и субстанции, но и более высокое единство – деятельностное единство языка, речевого общения и человека (Алефиренко, 2014, p. 27).

(the focal point of cognitive-pragmatic linguistics is not only language in its inseparable union of form and substance, but also a more higher entity – the union of language, verbal communication and a human being that is operational in nature.)

This translates into creative generation of a literary work or reconstruction of the author’s conceptsphere through resorting to the potential of the abstract system of language, verbal communication and the individuality of production and interpretation originating from connotative construction of meaning. In the face of such a nature of discourse, it is impossible to omit the fact that discursive activity of one side of the process – the author – boils down to the totality of his or her verbal and mental processes that unfold parallel to the process of creating a literary text. Due to this, by means of generating the linear structure of words he or she makes an attempt at mirroring the nonlinear mental space that exists behind the text and constitutes the environment of its creation. What is important is that the phenomenon of discourse, in this understanding, requires the existence of concepts, as they become the idea and

energy that awakens discursive activity of the author, while discourse turns out to be the space in which these concepts are constructed and shaped.

The perspective of the subject of literary communication has a direct impact on the shape and content of concepts created as a result of interacting with a literary text. In other words, it is tied to either the “author’s” or the “reader’s” view of the text. Such an observation is in direct relation to the views of U. Eco who has developed the three categories of intentions relevant for literary communication: the text’s, author’s and reader’s intention (Eco, 1985, p. 235). Importantly, U. Eco has also pondered upon the existence of two categories of readers, being the empirical and model reader. While the first one is the actual person who engages in the process of reading a literary text, the second one is the entity that is the perfect reader from the point of view of the writer who is “able to deal interpretively with the text in the same way as the author deals generatively” (Eco, 1979, p. 7). Therefore, in literature the author is the creating subject, while the reader – the receiving subject. However, it does not deprive the latter of the ability to interpret a text subjectively, being, in a way, a process in which it is created once again – reconstructed. This may make one admit that discursive activity of the author remains invisible, yet key to generating and forming particular concepts that consequently transform into a conceptsphere, while they in turn have to be recreated by the reader. Such a relevant role of the latter allows to label the reader as a “co-author” of a literary text.

As such, the coexistence of discourse and concepts makes it necessary to interpret the latter as mental equivalents of particular elements of the setting of a literary text. Then, they are either expressed through linguistic structures or formed under the influence of them. Yet, one should not ignore a more philosophical dimension of concepts, since the pace of the process of literary text creation may originate from a particular goal that the writer wants to achieve. From the perspective of the setting of a literary text, they are the core envoy that may be embodied in various manners, usually taking the shape of protagonists. By means of their actions, main characters can trigger reactions of another elements of the setting and can be a power that stipulates them to interact with one another.

In the ideal interpretation of the process, the reader is supposed to form such a conceptsphere in his or her mind that is equivalent to the original one existing in the mind of the author. In spite of this, the process of reading relies solely on the verbal layer of a literary text that is a flattened and debased version of the original multilayered mental structure. Nonetheless, it becomes apparent that a literary text is not delivered to the reader with its underlying sphere of concepts, as it is a result of the transformation of their spatiality into linearity. The situation that is specific to the process of reading is the opposite of creating a literary text, since words stimulate formation of a conceptsphere in the reader’s mind. On the basis of this one

might maintain that the reader is as important as the author in the process of literary communication.

It is worth highlighting that the explication of the author's discourse appears to be the way to achieving precision in reconstructing the full meaning of words that constitute a literary text – it should eventually lead to rendering the original conceptsphere of a text. Because of this, it is relevant to determine two basic spheres of authors' and readers' discursive spaces:

1. *the personal sphere* that includes their biography, life experience, worldview, fusion of intentions and goals related to the literary text, idiolanguage and idioculture, as well as their approach to a literary text – all of them are particular to a given subject of literary communication;
2. *the social sphere* that includes the context of time and space, the specificity of the era in which the work is created or read, as well as the commonly known facts of the subjects' language and culture (Алефиренко, 2014, p. 24).

On the one hand, the necessary condition of a literary text emergence is a specific idea, being the author's vision of the setting: its internal organisation, relations among its elements and its visual aspect. In other words, the verbal form of a literary text is built on the basis of a mental foundation existing in the mind of the author – he or she consciously chooses certain words to express the underlying concepts. On the other hand, when it comes to the reader's standpoint, his or her position is at the opposite end of the spectrum. It entails creating a conceptsphere with a constant reference to the text that relies on the aforementioned personal and social spheres of discursive activity. It is a subjective process, which makes it impossible to understand the literary text in exactly the same way as its author did. As a result, each reader may reconstruct the world of a literary work in a dissimilar way, what allows one to notice how individualised the process of interacting with literature is.

The foundations of the process of such a discursive constructing of a literary text translate into particular stages (Алефиренко, Rachut, 2017, p. 39). As a matter of fact, each of these stages individually and all of them together take place within the discursive space of the writer. Accordingly, they are governed by the aforementioned personal and social spheres of discourse, hence being human-dependent and subjective based on one's general knowledge of language and culture. In other words, this discursive process of literary text creation is anthropocentric, as it is determined by the individuality of the writer who consciously confronts the results of his or her creative process with the general knowledge, beliefs and values.

The first stage of this process is imagination that boils down to forming separate elements of the setting of a literary text in the mind of the writer (Алефиренко, Rachut, 2017, p. 40). It usually results in creating key characters and places that will have a grave importance for the development of the plot. As it is an ongoing state, they become more and more full-fledged along with the creative work of the writer.



The second stage, stemming from imagination, is generating signifiers – the mental and subjective components of a communicative event (Alefirenko, Rachut, 2017, s. 40). By means of this, the previously generated single elements of the setting engage into mutual relations, as well as stimulate the emergence of new ones that are necessary for achieving particular goals of the writer. The existence of this stage suggests that the author constructs the setting of a literary work during the process of working on it, and may not finish it before having written the ultimate version of the text. At this stage, the level of granularity of the reality represented by the literary text can be compared to a mere photography with no sufficient cognitive depth.

The third stage revolves around conceptualisation of the image of signifiers, so that they are transformed into literary concepts (Alefirenko, Rachut, 2017, p. 40). It is possible specifically when the visualisation of a signifier is highly detailed – it implies that individual elements of a literary world are put together within a bigger communicative event. By means of this, pre-prepared separate entities representing, for instance, people, places and objects start to act together as if they were single musicians who gather up to play as an orchestra. It is worth noting that a literary concept consists of the three following elements: its permanent meaning, subjective results of its interpretation, as well as the representation of a communicative event that requires the particular element to act in it. Subsequently, the generated concepts that give mental grounds for developing the elements of the setting, become categorised. It means all of its elements are grouped into key categories. Primarily, it boils down to dividing them into the following five categories: people, human-like creatures, animals, objects and places. Additionally, they can be assigned to more abstract categories, for instance those good and bad.

The fourth stage is verbalisation by means of which the writer transforms a mental conceptsphere into a material form – written language (Alefirenko, Rachut, 2017, p. 40). On the one hand, it makes the conceptsphere perceivable for the participants of the process of literary communication, since it has previously existed only in the mind of the writer and could have been occasionally expressed. On the other hand, this verbal filtration of the original conceptsphere turns mental entities into flat strings of words. It can be attributed to the fact that literature entails the existence of *places of indeterminacy* – describing the elements of the setting imagined by the writer fully is impossible due to not only natural limitations of language, but also due to his or her conscious decisions (Ingarden, 1988, p. 107). It translates into presenting the reader with a partial image of a literary event, yet apt enough to instigate the reader's curiosity and stipulate further mental processes. Ultimately, the writer wants to give the reader an opportunity to use his or her imagination to fill certain gaps that are present in the description of the world of a literary text.

All in all, the present consideration allows one to make an inference that the contents of a conceptsphere directly depends on both linguistic and cultural, as well

as from discursive facts. Importantly, all of the three aspects work together within personal and social components of subjects' discursive activity. In this context, it is evident that a conceptsphere is dependent on discursive activity of writers and readers, being, on the one hand, the source of literary text creation, but also, on the other hand, the result of interacting with the text. In this sense, it is reasonable to assume that for both writers and readers the elements of the setting of a literary text are para-existing components of their mental and personal reality. Still, it should be highlighted that their assumed existence is a result of a mutual agreement between the participants of literary communication, which means that they consciously regard non-existent objects as factually existing ones.

Following this train of thought, one may acknowledge that the conceptsphere of a literary text is a collection of concepts that interact with each other within the discursive space of a subject of literary communication – to be specific, in each act of verbalization of the author's conceptsphere or its reconstruction. The essence of a concept and a conceptsphere is their mentality – they can be partially verbalised, but they cannot be fully expressed through language. As a final remark, it should be pinpointed that the phrase “the conceptsphere of a literary text” is a necessary simplification, since it is in fact a mental construct that is anthropocentric – it is shaped by and rooted in the discursive space of a human being. A literary text in itself is a mere medium in the process of literary communication that either represents a conceptsphere or generates it.

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## THE ANTHROPOCENTRISM OF THE PROCESS OF LITERARY COMMUNICATION AS DISCURSIVE ACTIVITY

### Abstract

This article examines the specificity of the link between the process of literary communication and discursive activity that manifests itself in the form of a literary text. Taking into consideration the postulates propagated by T. van Dijk and the cognitive-pragmatic postulates by N.F. Alefirienko on discourse, the author asserts that the discursive space of writers and readers is a verbal-mental source and environment for forming concepts that altogether constitute a conceptsphere – the mental foundation of the setting of a literary text. The act of creating and reading a literary text is therefore an anthropocentric process that is subjected to personal and social spheres that make discourse an individual property of each subject. Thus, interaction with a text becomes a unique act. A literary text consequently becomes only a material medium through which authors' conceptspheres are verbalised and the readers' conceptspheres are constructed.

**Keywords:** discourse, verbal-mental activity, literary text, concept, conceptsphere, literary setting

## ANTROPOCENTRYZM PROCESU KOMUNIKACJI LITERACKIEJ JAKO DZIAŁALNOŚĆ DYSKURSYWNA

### Abstrakt

W niniejszym artykule autor analizuje specyfikę współzależności występującej pomiędzy procesem komunikacji literackiej a działalnością dyskursywną, która wyraża się pod postacią tekstu literackiego. Biorąc pod uwagę klasyczne ustalenia T. van Dijka i kognitywno-pragmatyczne N.F. Alefirienko dotyczące dyskursu, autor stwierdza, że przestrzeń dyskursywna pisarza i czytelnika jest myślowo-słownym źródłem i środowiskiem formowania konceptów, które wspólnie tworzą konceptosferę – mentalny fundament świata przedstawionego

w dziele literackim. Akt tworzenia i odczytywania tekstu literackiego jest zatem procesem antropocentrycznym podporządkowanym indywidualnym i społecznym elementom dyskursu, które czynią z dyskursywności osobistą własność każdego człowieka, a każdy akt interakcji z tekstem – aktem niepowtarzalnym. Dlatego tekst literacki należy rozumieć jako jedynie materialne medium, za pośrednictwem którego konceptosfera autora jest werbalizowana, a konceptosfera czytelnika jest konstruowana.

**Słowa kluczowe:** dyskurs, działalność słowno-myślowa, tekst literacki, koncept, konceptosfera, świat przedstawiony