

УДК 82

## FUNCTION OF TITLE IN DEFINING THE MAIN IDEA OF LITERARY TEXT

**Vlasova Natalya Petrovna**

senior lecturer  
Kazan federal university (branch), Elabuga

*author@apriori-journal.ru*

**Abstract.** The article deals with the problem of defining the main idea while interpreting literary text, considers it in close connection of the title and types of information and ways of their interplay as well. The title is presented as a means of actualization of text categories. The named items are realized interpreting the short story by R. Lardner «Who Dealt?».

**Key words:** title; explicit information; implicit information; text category.

---

## ФУНКЦИЯ ЗАГЛАВИЯ В ОПРЕДЕЛЕНИИ СМЫСЛА ЛИТЕРАТУРНОГО ТЕКСТА

**Власова Наталья Петровна**

старший преподаватель  
Казанский федеральный университет (филиал), Елабуга

**Аннотация.** Статья затрагивает проблему определения смысла при интерпретации литературного текста, рассматривает ее в тесной связи заглавия и типов информации, а также способов их взаимодействия в тексте. Заглавие рассматривается как актуализатор текстовых категорий. Названные положения реализуются на примере интерпретации рассказа Р. Ларднера «Кому сдавать?».

**Ключевые слова:** заглавие; эксплицитная информация; имплицитная информация; текстовая категория.

Text as a linguistic phenomenon is a many-layer informative structure which requires a complex analysis to define its essential idea. As a linguistic sign, text is a dialectical unity of form and matter. Thus, text information is presented both explicitly and implicitly. Primarily, while interpreting a literary text the reader deals with its explicit, or factual information. It is natural and necessary but not enough to define the main idea of the text, this is only a basis for deeper analysis.

Text can be interpreted in many ways, which depends on the reader's background (his education and life experience). Nevertheless, interpretation cannot be inadequate to the writer's intention to express some important idea. To surmount the difficulty of its defining it's necessary to bear in mind that the idea of the text is made up in a certain way on different levels. In linguistics, the phonetic, the morphologic, the lexical and the syntactical levels are traditionally distinguished where the importance of the lexical level is particularly pointed out since it is more connected with semantics of the literary text and with the ability of words to arouse various associations. When we say that text is a communicative many-layer structure where information is presented both explicitly and implicitly, then for the adequate interpretation it's important to detect in the text the places where implication becomes conspicuous, usually it is verbally conspicuous.

Virtually all linguists who study text, e.g. V.A. Kukhareenko [1], L.G. Babenko [2] agree that the title is of paramount importance when we define the main idea of a literary work. In fact, the title is concentration of the fundamental idea of a text. L.G. Babenko [2, p. 41] considers that in the title many text categories are actualized – informativity, integrity, coherence (outer and inner), completion, etc. The title takes the strong position in the text, it at once gives the reader a certain aim and expectations, which may be wrong, because only after reading the whole of the text it is possible to fully realize its meaning.

We will try to determine functions of the title in defining the main idea in the short story by the American writer Ring Lardner «Who Dealt» (pub. in

1926). The composition of the story is rather unusual – it is a monologue of a tipsy woman (we don't know her name) who is playing cards with her husband Tom and his old friends – a married couple Helen and Arthur. On the surface, the title of the story corresponds to the theme of the story – the meeting of the friends and their playing cards. We may say the title here fulfills the nominative and the informative functions – it names the theme and informs the reader about it. The title fulfils here another function – that of outer coherence, it is actualized in using the vocabulary which describes card playing. The woman, while playing cards, asks questions concerning the rules: «...*What are we playing for? Yes, a penny is perfectly all right*» ... [3, p. 78], she comments on her playing and her card partners playing: «*What did you bid, Helen? And you, Tom? You doubled her? And Arthur passed?...*» [3, p. 80]. «... *I haven't any five-card...*», «...*I do hold the most terrible cards!*»... [3, p. 84]. «*Oh, Tom, only two downs?...*», «...*Why, Helen, you revoked!...*» [3, p. 90]). She uses the names and suits of cards: *the king of clubs, the queen of spades* [3, p. 90], *the ace of hearts* [3, p. 90], *two diamonds* [3, c. 9]. We see that she is not good at playing cards, doesn't know the rules properly: «...*I wish I could remember what that means. I know that sometimes when he doubles he means one thing and sometimes another. But I always forget which is which. ....Oh, I'm sorry, Tommie! I knew I'd get it wrong. Please, forgive me!...*» [3, p. 80]. She plays only to keep company to her husband and his friends. Since she is not very much interested in playing cards the most part of her heterogeneous monologue is about Tom whom she married three months ago. We can distinguish several theme in her monologue – Tom's sporting experience when he was a student, his political ambitions (how he was going to be elected a mayor), that he used to be alcohol addicted ,his musical and theatrical preferences , his talent to write stories and poems. She tells about all these with affection and sympathy, explaining why Tom didn't succeed in one thing or another.

Remembering the types of information in text we can say that playing cards is factual, explicit information, which is marked in the title. But while interpreting text one cannot ignore such a phenomenon as *polysemy*. The verb «to deal» has several meanings, among them we find: *To distribute cards in a card game* [4]. This meaning also corresponds to the explicit information. At the same time, words in a definite context can arouse certain associations – in the story in question the verb «to deal» obtains the meaning «to give away». The woman gives away the things which her husband prefers to keep in secret from his friends.

Supposing, in the structure of the title meaning there are both components of the meaning of the verb «to deal» where the second one signals implicit information which comes out in the form of Tom's reaction to his wife's story. E.g. when she tells them that he used to drink a lot we read: «...*But it's all over now, thank heavens! And he says it's forever, don't you dear? Though I don't mind a person drinking if they do it in moderation. But you know Tom! He goes the limit in everything he does. All right, dear; I won't make you blush...*» [3, p. 76]. When she is boasting proudly that Tom's candidature for a mayor could be put forward she is not aware that, in fact, she is telling about his another failure: «...*Oh, did you know they tried to get Tom to run for mayor? Tom is making faces at me to shut up...*» [3, p. 86]. It turns out that his sporting career was far from being successful and he doesn't feel like remembering it: «...*You needn't look that way, Tommie...*» [3, p. 80].

Another theme in the woman's monologue – Tom's addiction to alcohol which is thought to be in the past: «...*Don't tempt him, Ken*» I said. «*Tom isn't a drinker like you and Gertie and the rest of us. When he starts, he can't stop...*» [3, p. 82]. «...*He told me about once in Pittsburg – All right, Tommie; I won't say another word. But it's all over now, thank heavens! Not a drop since we've been married; three whole months...*» [3, p. 76].

The composition of the story is supported by the principle of gradation, where the climax is shifted to the end of the story, i.e. the woman strikes the

strongest blow to Tom at the end of her monologue when she tells about the writing talent of her husband. Once she found and read Tom's poems and a story which he had written four years before. The woman tells with indignation and resentment that magazines hadn't taken them to be published, then she retells the story and recites some poems. Everybody, except the woman, understands that the characters of the story are Tom, Arthur and Helen – some years ago both Tom and Arthur were in love with Helen who, in the end, married Arthur though she loved Tom: «...Isn't that pretty. He wrote it four years ago. **Why, Helen, you revoked! And, Tom, do you know that's Scotch you're drinking? You said – Why, Tom! ...**» [3, p. 98].

Thus, in the short story «Who Dealt?» the title actualizes its main idea where actualization is presented in the interplay of two meanings of the verb «to deal», where one (*to distribute the cards in a card game*) corresponds to the explicit information, the other (*give away secrets*) – with the implicit information. Playing cards is only surface, whereas the implication is Tom's ruined life. All things considered, it is possible to conclude that the lexical level determines the semantics and the meaning of the text; the title actualizes the text categories of coherence, integrity, completion, etc.; the meaning of the title is realized only in retrospection, i.e. after having read the whole of the text.

#### **СПИСОК ИСПОЛЬЗОВАННЫХ ИСТОЧНИКОВ**

1. Кухаренко В.А. Интерпретация текста. М.: Просвещение, 1988. 192 с.
2. Бабенко Л.Г. Лингвистический анализ текста. М.: Флинта: Наука, 2008. 496 с.
3. Американская новелла XX века: Сборник / сост. Г.В. Лапина.
4. Словарь Merriam-Webster [Электронный ресурс]. Режим доступа: <http://www.merriam-webster.com> (дата обращения: 24.04.2015).