

## THE NOMINATIVE SPACE MYSTERY THROUGH THE ICONIC LENS (A STUDY OF MODERN ENGLISH FICTION)

The nominative space MYSTERY is viewed as the inventory of language means verbalizing the concept MYSTERY, the concepts associated with it (such as the QUESTOR, HOLDER OF MYSTERY/CO-HOLDER OF MYSTERY etc.) and the relations between them. Basing on Ch.S. Peirce's classifications of signs into icons, indices and symbols, the article zooms in on the former, **aiming** at providing a systematic analysis of iconically motivated signs within the nominative space MYSTERY. Since iconicity is regarded as one of the structuring principles in language [1, p. 5], a creative force conducive to expressivity [2, p. 20] within the framework of cognitive semantics, its potential in motivating the constituents of the nominative space under investigation merits a closer look.

The **object** of the present paper is iconicity as a motivating factor instrumental in the formation and functioning of signs constituting the nominative space MYSTERY, whereas the types of iconic signs within it present the **subject** of the article. The research **material** comes from 20<sup>th</sup>–21<sup>st</sup> century English novels.

In Ch.S. Peirce's work, a distinction is drawn between a *genuine icon*, which “turns out to be its own object referring to nothing but itself”, thus being an “autoreferential or self-representing sign”, and a *hypoicon*, which is similar to its object by virtue of exhibiting some of its characteristics [3, p. 19]. Three classes of hypoicons are elaborated, with *images* being perceptually alike through mimicking the intrinsic oral/aural, tactile or visual qualities of the referent [4, p. 32; 2, p. 22], *diagrams* building on the structural analogy between the represent and the object and *metaphors* constituting “mediated iconicity” [3, p. 21], which signify by establishing semantic parallelism between two objects motivating a single sign [5, p. 74–75].

Among the iconic means pertaining to the nominative space MYSTERY, silence as a *zero element* [6, p. 9] appears to be an *imagic sign*, whereby the absence of an articulated reply mirrors lack of knowledge on the part of the communicator. For instance, in the exchange below, Mrs. Blenkinsop chooses not to answer in order to emphasize the fact that she is clueless about the suspicions her interlocutor voices.

1. *There was a queer smile on the Commander's face. He said: “So you haven't heard of Sans Souci? That surprises me very much – since I was under the impression, you know, that you'd been living there for the last month...” There was a dead silence. The Commander said: “What about that, Mrs. Blenkinsop?” “I don't know what you mean. Dr. Binion. I landed by parachute this morning”* [12, p. 103–104].

Similarly, *aposiopesis* – “the sudden breaking off of a piece of discourse by failing to provide the final words of a clause or sentence” [7, p. 130] can be viewed as an *imagic iconic sign* capitalizing on incompleteness framed by silence. It allows the speaker to background dubious, unproven information by providing a hint (beginning the utterance) and consigning the questionable part to silence. Additionally, in the given exchange it serves as a mitigating device, helping the addresser (Nancy) not to hurt Bee's feelings by referring to her nephew explicitly, thus leaving room for optimism.

2. Nancy: *“But, Bee! It had been months in the water, hadn't it? They couldn't even tell what sex it was; could they? And Castleton is miles away. And they get all the corpses from the Atlantic founderings, anyhow. I mean, the nearer ones. It is not sense to worry over – to identify it with –” Her dismayed voice died into silence. “No, of course it isn't!” Bee said briskly. “I am just being morbid. Have some more coffee”* [13, p. 12].

Whereas in the above examples the pause remains unfilled, silence as an aural icon (aural “iconicity of absence”) can be *supplemented* [8, p. 115] by indexical non-verbal signs. Accordingly, in the following discourse fragment Jonas's lack of knowledge finds its expression both through the verbal channel (or rather a meaningful lack of an articulated reply) and by means of non-verbal coding, the latter also conveying additional attitudinal information.

3. *Inspector Hackett swiveled about to look at Jonas Delahaye sprawled in the armchair: “Would you have any idea” – he glanced towards James – “either of you, why your father would kill himself?” Jonas shrugged, lifting one shoulder and pulling down his mouth at the corners* [14, p. 54].

However, apart from being an *iconic blank* [8, p. 114], silence can function as an index, actualizing the causal connection between unwillingness to cooperate and providing no reply. For example, in the exchange below, the interlocutor's failure to answer is taken as a marker of avoidance and concealment:

4. *... for when the truth is disclosed, as it will be, the question of complicity will arise. How long have you two known each other?” He knew; I had told him. But apparently they had both forgotten, for neither answered. “Well?” Wolfe was crisp. “Miss Geer, how long have you been acquainted with Mr. Jensen. I don't suppose it's a secret?” Jane's teeth were holding her lower lip. She removed them. “I met him day before yesterday. Here”* [15, p. 83].

In a similar vein, a break in speech can be indicative of a conflict in the communicative intentions of the interlocutors. The following use of *aposiopesis* is motivated by the speaker's reluctance to disclose any more details about the investigation and constitutes an attempt at diverting attention and changing the topic.

5. *“What about the shotgun? Anybody trace the serial?” “The number had been filed and acid-burned. No trace. You know, Harry, I shouldn't be saying so much. I think we should just...” He didn't finish the sentence. He turned his chair back to the file cabinet and began to put his charts away* [16, p. 60].

*Ellipsis*, which is defined as “the omission of elements that are precisely recoverable from the linguistic and situational context” [9, p. 156], can be considered an example of *diagrammatic iconicity*. In this case, the correspondence between the relevant new material vs. the obvious information and between the pronounced vs. elided part of the utterance is iconically motivated as the relationship between figure and ground. Thus, the speaker can highlight the currently important details while conforming to the Gricean maxim of quantity (“Be brief”) at the same time.

6. *He turned to me. “Archie. Please look closely at the scratch on her cheek.” <...> “Made with something with a fine sharp point. It could have been a needle, but more likely a small scissors point.” “When?” “The best guess is today, but it could have been yesterday I suppose. Not possibly three days ago”* [17, p. 188–189].

As a diagram exploiting the figure and ground relation, ellipsis can also serve the purpose of backgrounding the information one chooses to hide. In exchange (7), the utterance in bold is semantically incomplete, with the speaker leaving out the SOURCE of information, which prompts his interlocutor to ask for specification.

8. *“If Leopold Heim had paid you the ten grand or any part of it, what would you have done with it?” “Held onto it until I got word.” “Word from whom?” “I don’t know”* [17, p. 259].

*Repetition* plays on the iconic quantity principle, establishing correspondence between the amount of linguistic form and the amount, importance or unpredictability of conceptual information [10, p. 49]. Accordingly, in the following excerpt, the speaker reiterates the verb “admitted” to stress the fact that the disclosure of information by the investigating officers was under duress and also to express his negative attitude, trying to convince his father of the improper handling of the case by the police (EMPHASIS IS QUANTITY [4, p. 50]).

8. *“Because,” Muhannad announced, and the tone of his voice told Sahlah that her brother had saved the best for last, “they’ve now admitted it’s murder.” <...> Now that Muhannad had ferreted out the truth, Sahlah knew that her father would have to think in different terms. <...> “Admitted, Father. To us. Because of what happened at today’s council meeting and in the street afterwards. Wait. Don’t respond yet”* [18, p. 78].

In the descriptions of various scenarios involving MYSTERY, *diagrammatic iconicity* can also be traced on the level of *semantics*, in which case it presents a correlation between linguistic content and the way a person conceives of a situation. This can be exemplified by the increasing specificity of nominations for the object of the search as the scenario SOLVING A MYSTERY unfolds and information is mounting. In the following excerpts, describing the process of establishing the identity of a dead body, the person, first referred to by a term of high generality (the noun *man*), is then named according to his role in the context of the investigation (*victim*). Consequently, he receives a frame-relative unique designator (namor [11, p. 59]) – *Juan Doe #67* – which serves to identify him and also communicates his nationality as well as other details. Later he is singled out on the basis of his occupation (which is still fuzzy, as the *of*-phrase signals), with the premises for drawing this conclusion expressed later in the prepositional phrase (*the man with the worker’s hands and muscles*). Finally, the label *Juan Doe*, conventionally adopted by the police, is placed against the man’s real name.

9. *The other was the eight-day-old discovery of the body of a man behind a twenty-four-hour diner on Sunset near the Directors Guild building* [16, p. 44]. *The victim, estimated to be about fifty-five years old, was referred to as Juan Doe #67. This because he was believed to be Latin and was the sixty-seventh unidentified Latin man found dead in Los Angeles County during the year* [16, p. 44]. *He had been a worker of some kind* [16, p. 45]. *He knew the key was to find out who the man with the worker’s hands and muscles had been* [16, p. 56]. *Looks like our Juan Doe was a guy named Gutierrez-Llosa. He was from Mexicali* [16, p. 119].

*Metaphor*, the third type in Ch.S. Peirce’s classification, brings together two referents, establishing similarity between disparate conceptual representations. In the example below, investigation is metaphorically correlated with physical motion, while the anaphora (a diagram) reinforces the iconic meaning of the linguistic signs, mirroring the idea of going from a single starting point in different directions.

10. *To find a murderer you followed clues, yes. But you also followed emotions. The ones that stank, the foul and putrid ones. You followed the slime. And there, cornered, you’d find your quarry* [19, p. 70].

Thus, iconically motivated signs in the data analyzed fall into *images*, copying the perceptual qualities of the referent and represented by aposiopesis and supplemented/unsupplemented silence in dialogical exchanges; *diagrams*, building on structural parallelism and exemplified by ellipsis and different types of repetition; *metaphors*, actualizing similarity on the conceptual level. **Further research prospects** are offered by the structural and functional characteristics both of the iconic and symbolic language signs making up the nominative space MYSTERY in English.

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**Summary**

**K. STRELCHENKO. THE NOMINATIVE SPACE MYSTERY THROUGH THE ICONIC LENS  
(A STUDY OF MODERN ENGLISH FICTION)**

The article investigates iconic language signs pertaining to the nominative space MYSTERY. The research material was drawn from 20th–21st century English fiction. The data analysis allowed to single out signs based on perceptual likeness of the representamen and the referent (silence, aposiopesis), structural analogy between them (ellipsis, repetition), and similarity on the conceptual level (metaphor).

**Key words:** iconicity, nominative space, mystery, image, diagram, metaphor.

**Анотація**

**K. СТРЕЛЬЧЕНКО. ІКОНІЧНІСТЬ У НОМІНАТИВНОМУ ПРОСТОРИ MYSTERY  
(НА МАТЕРІАЛІ СУЧАСНОЇ АНГЛОМОВНОЇ ПРОЗИ)**

Стаття присвячена аналізу іконічних мовних знаків, що входять до номінативного простору MYSTERY. Матеріалом дослідження слугувала англійська художня проза ХХ – ХХІ ст. Було виокремлено знаки, що базуються на перцептивній подібності репрезентамена й референта (мовчання, апосіопеза), структурній аналогії між ними (еліпсис, повтор) та подібності на концептуальному рівні (метафора).

**Ключові слова:** іконічність, номінативний простір, таємниця, образ, діаграма, метафора.

**Аннотация**

**K. СТРЕЛЬЧЕНКО. ИКОНИЧНОСТЬ В НОМИНАТИВНОМ ПРОСТРАНСТВЕ MYSTERY  
(НА МАТЕРИАЛЕ СОВРЕМЕННОЙ АНГЛОЯЗЫЧНОЙ ПРОЗЫ)**

Статья посвящена анализу иконических языковых знаков, составляющих часть номинативного пространства MYSTERY. Материалом исследования послужила англоязычная художественная проза ХХ – ХХІ вв. Были выделены знаки, базирующиеся на перцептивном подобии репрезентамена и референта (молчание, апосіопеза), структурной аналогии между ними (эллипсис, повтор) и подобии на концептуальном уровне (метафора).

**Ключевые слова:** иконичность, номинативное пространство, тайна, образ, диаграмма, метафора.