

## NEGATION TO DENOTE THE CONCEPT *BALANCE* IN THE MODERN AMERICAN SHORT STORIES

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The purpose of the article is to study the role of negation in the representation of the concept *BALANCE* in the modern American stories. The methods of component, contextual-interpretative and conceptual analysis are employed.

**Results.** It was found out that the linguistic reflection of the concept *BALANCE* is determined by one's sensorimotor experience, which includes pre-conceptual ideas about the balance of the body, and can be represented by lexical and grammatical means, one of which is negation. It was revealed that the negation reflects a certain value conflict in the mind of the characters in the stories studied, the inconsistency of the obtained information to the system of knowledge about the world they acquired. Regarding the fact that the loss of balance is the result of force, which disrupts the stability of the human condition, we correlated the negations with force gestalts, which were used to model the personages' balance loss. The result of balance loss is a deviation from the *VERTICAL*, which is correlated with the deviation from the norm, because, firstly, any violation is considered as non-compliance with a certain norm, and secondly, having a general context of opposition as a basis, negation signals about non-compliance with the expected real. Thus, the role of negation as a means of expression of the studied concept is to reveal the physical, psychological and social perspectives of the image of the character in the modern American stories.

**Conclusions.** Negations are correlated with the description of the physiological, emotional states of the characters and their social status, which determines the type of the lost balance. Negative adjectives in parallel with nouns are the skeleton elements of the text, which we interpret as the main carriers of information about balance loss of the characters in the stories analyzed. The convergence of negations as a means of balance loss representation in small passages of the stories creates the effect of a gradual, however, total loss of balance and characterizes the described situation as desperate. Thus, the concept *BALANCE* in the studied prose is actualized in dynamics, due to the development of the personages' images, which are characterized by the initial balance and its loss.

**Key words:** conceptual content, literary discourse, force gestalts, balance loss of a character, norm, convergence of negations.

## ЗАПЕРЕЧЕННЯ НА ПОЗНАЧЕННЯ КОНЦЕПТУ *РІВНОВАГА* В СУЧАСНИХ АМЕРИКАНСЬКИХ ОПОВІДАННЯХ

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**Метою** статті є дослідження ролі заперечення в репрезентації концепту *РІВНОВАГА* в сучасних американських оповіданнях, здійснене за допомогою **методів** компонентного, контекстуально-інтерпретативного та концептуального аналізу.

**Результати.** Виявлено, що мовне відображення концепту РІВНОВАГА детермінується сенсомоторним досвідом людини, який включає передконцептуальні уявлення про рівновагу тіла, і полягає в його позначенні лексичними та граматичними засобами, одним із яких є заперечення. З'ясовано, що заперечення відображає певний ціннісний конфлікт у свідомості персонажа, невідповідність отриманої інформації системі знання про світ, що пов'язано з ментальними уявленнями про істину, які є частиною ядерних понять про власне місце й роль у природі та суспільстві. З огляду на те, що втрата рівноваги є результатом силового впливу, який порушує стабільність стану людини, ми співвіднесли заперечення із силовими гештальтами, за допомогою яких змоделивали порушення рівноваги персонажів. Результатом втрати рівноваги є відхилення від ВЕРТИКАЛІ, яке співвідноситься з відхиленням від норми, оскільки, по-перше, будь-яке порушення розглядаємо як невідповідність певній нормі, а по-друге, маючи загальний контекст протиставлення як підгрунтя, заперечення сигналізує про невідповідність очікуваного реальному. Отже, роль заперечення як засобу вираження досліджуваного концепту полягає в розкритті фізичного, психічного та соціального ракурсів образу персонажа в сучасних американських оповіданнях.

**Висновки.** Заперечення співвідносяться з описом фізіологічних, емоційних станів персонажів та їхнього соціального статусу, що зумовлює різновид втраченої рівноваги. Заперечні прикметники паралельно з іменниками є опорними елементами тексту, які ми тлумачимо як головні носії інформації про порушення рівноваги. Конвергенція заперечень як засобу позначення дисбалансу в невеликих за обсягом уривках оповідань створює ефект поступової, проте тотальної втрати рівноваги, а також характеризує описану ситуацію як безнадійну. Таким чином, концепт РІВНОВАГА представлений у досліджуваній прозі в динаміці внаслідок розвитку образів персонажів, яким властиві початкова рівновага та її порушення.

**Ключові слова:** концептуальний зміст, художній дискурс, силові гештальти, порушення рівноваги персонажа, норма, конвергенція заперечень.

## 1. Introduction

Being in the focus of modern linguistic and cognitive researches, the concept has been studied in various perspectives what accounts for its complicated nature. Firstly, the concept has a verbal aspect, in which it comes about as a reality, reflected in the mind not directly but through language. Secondly, the concept has a mental aspect, in terms of which it is the basic cognitive unit of knowledge representation. At last, the concept has a culturological aspect, from the standpoint of which it is regarded as a primitive cultural formation (Потапенко, 2013). Thus, contemporary conceptology tends to deal with the concept in its narrative (Жаботинская, 2017), linguosynergetic (Таценко, 2017), linguosemiotic (Колесник, 2016), mythological (Gusar, 2019) representations.

A significant place in modern linguistic researches is occupied by the study of lexical expression of cultural concepts (Степанов, 2007; Карасик, 2004; Воркачев, 2016) as multidimensional socio-psychic formations of collective consciousness, which ensure the entry of culture into one's mental world and are reflected by linguistic means (Степанов, 2007).

At the same time, the concepts that represent one's sensorimotor interaction with the environment remain insufficiently studied that predetermines the **topicality of the research work**. These include the concept BALANCE, which is formed as a result of one's gradual awareness of the body statics (Johnson, 1987; Lakoff, 1989), that leads to the idea of different types of balance – physical, psychological and social. Since the concepts formed under the influence of bodily experience are reflected in grammar and basic vocabulary (Кубрякова, 2006), **the major purpose of the article** is to study the concept BALANCE at the linguistic level, represented primarily by lexical and grammatical means, one of which is negation. Thus, **our task** is to specify the role of negation in denotation of the concept BALANCE in the modern American short stories.

## 2. The notion of negation in relation to the concept BALANCE actualization

Negation is considered as a multifunctional linguistic phenomenon to denote the unreality of an event or object from the speaker's point of view (Болдырев, 2003: 334). Linguistic reflection of a certain situation of reality requires the whole spectrum of human knowledge about it, emphasizing its properties relevant to a particular moment. Negation indicates the absence of the expected element of the event or one of its properties, that testifies to the inconsistency of the information obtained with stereotypical knowledge (Болдырев, 2003: 335–336; Кусова, 1997; Пилатова, 2002).

Moreover, the negation reflects a certain value conflict in the speaker's mind, the inconsistency of the received information to the system of knowledge about the world, which is associated with one's mental notions of truth regardless of the situation (Белова, 1997: 232).

In addition to the absence, lack or inconsistency, the negation also comprises the means to achieve them: actions aimed at deprivation, exclusion, etc. (Пилатова, 2002: 88). Negation, reflecting the absence or lack, reveals contradictions that are not tackled and represents the loss of balance (Полюжин, 1997: 28).

Regarding the fact that the loss of balance is the result of force, which violates the stability of the human condition, we correlate the negation with the force gestalts, which are used to model the loss of the personages' balance. The result of loss of balance is a deviation from the VERTICAL, which is correlated with the deviation from the norm, because, firstly, any violation is considered as non-compliance with a certain norm (Михальчук, 1997: 36), and secondly, having a general context of opposition as a basis (Белова, 1997: 234; Труб, 1994: 48), the negation signals about the inconsistency of the expected real (Арутюнова, 1987: 15; Труб, 1994: 49; Downing, 2002: 114). It is implied that the norm is relevant in all spheres of life, known to the reader (Арутюнова, 1987: 8) and formed by the national-cultural community (Мусієнко, 2005: 214).

The concept of norm is significantly influenced by anthropogenic factors: subjectivity of perception, emotional attitude and pragmatic goal. At the linguistic level, the social state of society, the national-cultural aspect, and the time factor are crucial (Мусієнко, 2005: 213). Thus, in the example: *Well, after Carmen left, Lobo fell into depression and began to get helpless* (Atwood, Ravenel, 1989: 39), the adjective *helpless* (“unable to act without help”) is contextually correlated with the verb *to fall* and indicates non-compliance – the ability to act independently, which testifies to a loss of mental balance, nominated by the noun *depression* (“a feeling of being extremely unhappy”).

### 3. Negation to denote different types of the personages' balance loss

The result of the systematization of negations to denote the personages' balance loss in the material analyzed is their correlation with the description of physiological, emotional states of the characters and their social contacts. The context of the negations use determines the kind of the balance loss.

When describing the **physical** balance loss of the protagonists, the negation indicates the result of a deviation from the VERTICAL, correlated with physiological norms, a certain defect or disease that deprives a person of the ability to perform normal functions or leads to the destruction of the integrity of the body, e. g.: *The morning was bright and still, and it was getting hot, but Thad seemed unable to distinguish between sun and shade. There had got to be something fluttery or mothlike about him now, so erratic and unsteady and unceasing were his movements* (Erdrich, Kenison, 1993: 233). In the example offered, the negation *unable* denotes the loss of the inherent human function of distinguishing light and darkness (*to distinguish between sun and shade*). Negations *erratic* (“*not following a regular pattern*”), *unsteady*, *unceasing* indicate the result of this physical disorder – deviation from the physiological norm of the body: the ability to move confidently, which testifies to a loss of physical balance of the character.

When describing the **psychological** balance loss of the protagonists, the negation indicates the result of a deviation from the VERTICAL, which correlates with the psycho-emotional norm of the person. Negations are combined with nouns to denote negative emotional states or negative emotions, e. g.: *For the first five years of their married life they had been worried about having no children. It had been a disappointment since both came from large sprawling Catholic families* (Spark, 1969: 14). The word phrases *having children* and *large sprawling Catholic families* characterize the norm of a large family generally accepted in society at that time. The negation *no children* means the deviation from this norm, which deprives the married couple of the opportunity to be full members of the society of that time. The noun *disappointment* (“*the feeling of being unhappy because something you hoped for or expected didn't happen*”) indicates the result of this deviation – negative emotions, unhappy married life and testifies to the loss of psychological balance.

When describing the social balance loss of the characters, the negation indicates the result of a deviation from the VERTICAL, correlated with social norms. The negations denote a violation of a person's social status, in particular one's low, unsatisfactory social position or complete disregard for society, e. g.: *With the friends of his roommate began Knute's series of disillusions. Humbly though he sought, he found no comradeship. He was the freak of the class, and his classmates were afraid of being “queered” by being seen with him* (Taggard, 1963: 176).

Thus, the noun *comradeship* characterizes the norm of university study as a student fraternity. The negations *no comradeship* and *freak* (“*someone who looks unusual, strange or behaves in a strange way*”; *strange* – “*unusual, unexpected, making you feel uncomfortable*”) indicate deviations from this norm, as a result of which the character is deprived of the opportunity to become part of the student fraternity and to achieve social success, what testifies to the violation of his social balance. The noun *disillusions* (“*the disappointed feeling you have when you discover that someone or something is not as good as you had believed*”) indicates the result of awareness of low social status – life frustration, that testifies to a loss of psychological balance.

Negative adjectives acquire special significance in denoting the concept BALANCE. Based on the definition, adjectives as a lexical-semantic class of predicate words express a feature of objects, events or other features marked by a name (ЛЭС, 1998: 397). Semantically multifunctional in nature, adjectives are involved in all areas of semantic organization of the text and are significantly informatively charged.

The adjectives to denote the characters' balance loss in the studied stories imply negation, as their vocabulary definitions include semes, indicating the absence; or have negative prefixes **un-** (“*not, denoting the absence of a quality or state*”), **in-** (“*not*”), as well as the suffix **-less** (“*not having, without*”). In the material analyzed negative adjectives reveal significant details of the situations of balance loss and embody multi-layered features, as the element that is negated in the sentence becomes the most significant and acts as its functional equivalent (Downing, 2002: 121).

The peculiarities of the functioning of negative adjectives to denote the personages' balance loss can be regarded in two aspects. First, they characterize the components of the situation of balance loss and are considered in parallel with nouns as basic elements of the text, e. g.: *It was then, in the unanswering silence as they stood in the empty, wax-floored hall, that Hugh felt there was something wrong. The room on this first warm day seemed strangely naked and cheerless. Hugh panicked* (Bierce, 1984: 362).

The proper name *Hugh* is combined with the adjectives *unanswering*, *cheerless*, which contain an explicit negation, and the adjectives *empty* (“*containing nothing*”), *naked* (“*not wearing any clothes*”), in which, according to their lexicographical definitions, the negation is implied. The combination of these negations with the nouns *silence* and *room* indicates the inconsistency of the deserted house when the boy returns home to its usual state, that ruins the psychological balance of the character (*to panick* – “*to have a sudden strong feeling of fear and unable to think clearly*”).

Secondly, negative adjectives are interpreted as the main carriers of information about balance loss, because the nouns they denote function as a means of structural design of the phrase, the meaning of which is fully conveyed by adjectives. At the same time, the meaning of negative adjectives that indicate balance loss is repeatedly duplicated in the text of the stories, e. g.: *Of all the Elwell family Aunt Mehetabel was certainly the most unimportant member. The Elwells were not consciously unkind to their aunt but she was so insignificant a figure in their lives that she was almost invisible to them* (Taska, 1995: 41).

In this example, the proper name *Mehetabel* is combined with the noun *Aunt*, which emphasizes her social status. Negative adjectives *unimportant*, *insignificant*, *invisible* are the main means to denote the social balance loss of the character due to her low status in the family.

The convergence of negations to denote balance loss in short passages of the stories studied creates the effect of gradual, however, total loss of balance and characterizes the described situation as desperate, e. g.: *The saddle began listing to*

the right, first slightly, then in a more pronounced and **uncontrollable way**. There was **no way to slow** the horse. There was **nothing she could do to regain control**. She grabbed at the horse's mane, but it was **hopeless**. There was **nothing Catherine could do** as the saddle slipped even farther; then suddenly flipped under Optima's belly. Catherine was jerked from her last possible grip, then hurled hard and fast to the ground where she received a devastating kick to the head by the horse's swift and mighty hoof – a blow leaving her crumpled and **unconscious on the cold, damp grass** (Bierce, 1984: 10).

The noun *control* characterizes the situational norm of riding. Negations *uncontrollable way, no way to slow the horse, nothing could do to regain control* indicate deviations from the norm and testify to the initial loss of the woman's physical balance. The next stage of balance loss aggravates the situation and is reflected in the negations *hopeless* and *nothing could do*, correlated with the movement DOWN (*under Optima's belly*). Finally, the culmination of the loss of balance is the fall, which is represented by the combination of the verbs *to jerk* and *to hurl* with the noun *ground*. The negation *unconsciousness* ("a condition in which you do not see, feel or think, usually because you are injured") expresses the woman's complete loss of physical balance due to serious physical injury and the violation of the vertical posture.

#### 4. Conclusions

Thus, regarding the fact that the loss of balance is the result of force aimed at disrupting human stability, the negation is correlated with the force gestalts with the help of which we model the characters balance loss in the stories under the analysis. The result of the balance loss is a deviation from the VERTICAL, which is a norm, the idea of which is formed under the influence of anthropogenic factors and due to the social status of society, national and cultural aspects, etc. The negations are correlated with the description of the physiological, emotional states of the characters and their social status, what determines the kind of the balance lost. Negative adjectives in parallel with nouns are considered as basic elements of the text or interpreted as the main carriers of information about the personages' balance loss. The convergence of negations as a means to denote balance loss in short passages of the stories creates the effect of a gradual, however, total loss of balance and characterizes the described situation as desperate.

The perspective research endeavors in this framework can be focused on the study of different types of negations to denote the concept BALANCE in various types of discourse: political, media, scientific, etc.

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