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## VERSATILE SUBTEXT BY ROALD DAHL: INTERPRETATION AND TRANSLATION

### БАГАТОГРАННИЙ ПІДТЕКСТ РОАЛЬДА ДАЛА: ІНТЕРПРЕТАЦІЯ ТА ПЕРЕКЛАД

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The subtext of an artistic text is one of the most important factors responsible for the emotionality, expressiveness and uniqueness of a literary work. The phenomenon of implicitness is quite a hard subject to research due to its nature, because this plane of a literary work is carefully hidden "between the lines". Subtext can be deliberately created by the writer, although in most cases, it is an inseparable product of supreme artistic writing: a "high-quality" literary work always has certain depth that "draws" the reader into the space of emotions and sensations, provokes thinking and the impulse to search for new meanings of the text. Since the phenomenon of subtext is multifaceted and heterogeneous, for the convenience of its study, one could distinguish different types of implicit meanings, both by the creation method and by the mechanism of influence on the reader. Roald Dahl's works are a unique phenomenon, which is an "encyclopedia" of different kinds of subtext, frequently coexisting within the same text. Thus, they make an ideal object for researching the mechanisms of implicit meaning creation, as well as its influence on the reader's perception of the text. The subtext is particularly pronounced in the writer's «wartime» stories, where the expressiveness of implicit meanings works to reveal the theme of «war and man». Also the study of subtextual mechanisms is much more effective in this case, because the so-called «semantic vectors» of the hidden plane of the literary work manifest themselves more clearly. In particular, it is possible to distinguish the following types of subtext: emotional or suggestive, philosophical-ethical subtext («leitmotif»). A complex set of artistic means builds up the hidden meaning of a literary work, where some elements function to create a specific subtext, others are part of a semantic vectors system aimed at revealing various hidden meanings. Regardless of the type of subtext, there is a number of stylistic techniques which most frequently create the implicitness of the artistic text: repetitions, artistic details, associative networks, the title and the ending, «visions». Deeper insight into the mechanisms of subtext creation and functioning will significantly improve the adequacy and accuracy of the literary work translation.

**Key words:** implicit meaning, consciously and unconsciously created subtext, semantic vector, associative network, artistic detail, text interpretation, adequate translation.

Підтекст художнього тексту – один із найголовніших чинників, що сприяють емоційності, виразності та неповторності твору. Явище імпліцитності є досить складним для дослідження через свою природу, адже цей план художнього твору старанно прихований «між рядками». Підтекст може бути свідомо створеним письменником, хоча здебільшого є невід'ємним продуктом якісного високохудожнього письма: літературний твір «вищого ґатунку» завжди має глибину, яка «затягує» читача у простір емоцій та почуттів, спонукає до роздумів та пошуків нових смислів тексту. Оскільки явище підтексту є багатоаспектним, неоднорідним, то для зручності його вивчення можна виділити різні види імпліцитних смислів як за способом творення, так і за механізмом впливу на читача. Творчість Роальда Дала – унікальне явище, яке є «енциклопедією» різних видів підтексту, які часто співіснують в межах одного твору, а значить, є ідеальним об'єктом для дослідження механізмів творення імпліцитних смислів, а також їх впливу на сприйняття тексту читачем. Особливо виразно проявляється підтекст у «воєнних» оповіданнях письменника, де виразність імпліцитних смислів працює на розкриття теми «війни та людини», і вивчення підтекстових механізмів є набагато ефективнішим, тому що чіткіше проявляють себе так звані «смилові вектори» прихованого плану твору. Зокрема, можемо виділити такі види підтексту, як емоційний або сугестивний, філософсько-етичний, підтекст – «лейтмотив». Складний комплекс художніх засобів вибудовує прихований смисл твору, деякі елементи працюють на створення одного конкретного підтексту, інші – є частиною системи смислових векторів, спрямованих на

розкриття різних прихованих смислів. Незалежно від виду підтексту, існує низка стилістичних прийомів, які найчастіше створюють імпліцитність художнього тексту: повтори, художні деталі, асоціативні сітки, заголовок та кінцівка твору, «візії». Глибше розуміння механізмів творення та функціонування підтексту художнього твору здатне значно підвищити адекватність та точність його перекладу.

**Ключові слова:** імпліцитний смисл, свідомо та несвідомо творений підтекст, смисловий вектор, асоціативна сітка, художня деталь, інтерпретація тексту, адекватний переклад.

**Problem under consideration.** Researching implicit meanings of a literary work is not an easy matter, for subtext has little material manifestation in the canvas of an artistic text. Yet, it is the hidden plane of the literary work that is responsible for its artistic value, that is why understanding the mechanism and the functioning of the implicit meanings would facilitate the process of fiction text analysis and interpretation let alone its adequate translation. We start with a few important premises, which help to outline our research framework. First, subtext is a sign of the highest degree of literary artistry, and if it is the case, any literary work of the artistic beauty is endowed with an implicit meaning. Second, literary subtext's nature can be of two kinds: consciously and unconsciously created ones, yet a system of artistic means responsible for the hidden meaning generation, as well as the way they function in the are generally the same. Finally, literary subtext itself can be of various kinds depending on the idea, concept or purpose it is meant to express; stylistic devices creating this or that kind of implicitness can either function solely for the creation of a kind of subtext or overlap building up the semantic vectors of different implicit meanings.

**The latest research analysis.** Literary subtext has been the subject of intense linguistic research for quite a long time, however the focus of attention was mainly on the interpretation of the implicit meaning as an integral part of the explicit ideas expressed in a particular literary text. Over time the spotlight was shifted to the investigation of the nature and mechanisms of subtext creation as well as to its intertextual and metatextual links. There is definitely a great number of scholars who researched the problem of a literary subtext as a whole (L. Bezuhla, L. Kravets, V. Kucharenko, L. Seger, M. Foka and others) as well as those who studied subtext in terms of literary text translation (P. Fawcett, E.-A. Gutt, Thomas E. Wartenberg, Sang Zhonggang and others). Whatever approach to the subtext studies we might take, this phenomenon is by no means outdated and is worth careful research, as its outcome could be not only better understanding of literary text and its degree of artistry but also higher standards adequacy of literary text translation.

**The article is aimed** at the research of various types of implicit meanings functioning in one and the same literary text with the aim of identifying a set of stylistic means creating every kind of the subtext and thus outlining the strategy of subtext interpretation and translation in the context of the whole literary work analysis.

**The main body of the article.** In some way a short story is an ideal genre to study subtext as its concise form can hold enormously reach implicit meaning, not unfrequently more than one, while having a number of stylistic means closely interacting with each other and easy to identify and analyse. Roald Dahl is known to be a multi-genre author, primarily famous for his children's novels, but this fact does not belittle his talent as a short story writer. His stories are «packed» with hidden meanings of various kinds, which can probably be explained by his idiosyncrasy as well as by the topics he chose for his writings. Thus the collection of short stories «Over to You: Ten Stories of Flyers and Flying», which was published in 1946 and is his earliest book of short stories, is known for its unique style, atypical for the writer. The collection was based on still fresh memories of Roald Dahl as a wartime pilot. Those bright and painful recalls together with the slow-paced and reflective mode might have contributed to the versatile implicit plane of the stories. The one called «Only This» is a stunning example of the writer's subtext artistry. Being a typical war time story with one of the most common themes, where a mother is living her life waiting for her son who is a fighter pilot in the World War II and who daily risks his life carrying out combat missions, «Only This» creates a strikingly expressive

thought-provoking life drama of humanity's scale. Not least this is due to the deep and multifaceted subtext woven into the story line.

The first type of subtext found in the story could be called emotional or suggestive subtext. It is the implicit plane of a literary text, which creates a certain emotional mood with the reader, either intensifying the message of the writings or being in stark contrast with the latter, in order to stir the reader's emotions and to provoke their reflection [6]. This kind of subtext is unique not only in terms of its essence, as it doesn't describe any idea or concept, but also from the point of view of its expressive means. In «Only This» the basic mood the writer wants to create is the mood of hopelessness, of despair. It is the profound grief of the mother who realizes she will never see her only child alive and virtually feels and endures his death. Hans Hendfridsson, the researcher of Roald Dahl's adult fiction, argues that the writer's short stories are endowed with what he calls the «macabre» [5, с. 6–8]. According to the dictionary definitions, the word macabre does not mean simply «gruesome» or «grim». Among the suggested meanings are «something that is very strange and unpleasant because it is connected with death or violence» [1] or «causing shock and fear because connected with death, esp. strange or cruel death:» [3]. In the story the concept of the macabre is not presented directly, it is being gradually suggested to the reader with the help of the whole associative network of stylistic means. In the first place these are various repetitions at different language levels. The writer discloses the emotion gradually and methodically. First, he sets the right emotional background with the help of two concepts: the concept of «loneliness» and «emptiness». For this he constantly uses the words which build associative links: «alone», «no other», «no noise», «silent», «emptiness», «loneliness». The woman is lonely not only because she lives alone, it is the night time and there are «no other houses in sight» but also because her son is not by her side and she doesn't know if she can ever see him again. In the course of the story the feeling of loneliness gives way to tension and anxiety and this emotional state is suggested by means of lexical repetitions («rumble which grew and grew and became louder and louder», «noise which throbbed and throbbed and kept on throbbing», «the noise and the throbbing overhead was very great») and modulation («God keep you», «Oh dear God keep you safe»). Suddenly the tension drops to the background mood («Then it was over», «the night became silent») and the reader feels relieved, but then again the emotion bursts out, soars to the degree of emotional climax – it is fear, helplessness, terror, panic and despair («a great loneliness and a great fear», «fear took hold of her», «She became terrified and panicky», «Frantically she tried to pull him out», «She was hysterical», «it was impossible»). The emotional climax is on the peak and yet again, it plummets down ending in the death of both, mother and her son. These mood swings steadily and deliberately carry the readers feelings away into the emotional edge allowing them to feel fully all the sharp pain, anguish of the main character, making them realize the overwhelming drama of the story.

Another important means of emotional suggestion in a literary text is a «vision», which is not only «an idea or mental image of something» [2] but also «an experience in which you see things that do not exist physically, when your mind is affected powerfully by something such as deep religious thought or drugs or mental illness» [2]. The state of vision is suggestive by itself, as it is something that is experienced subconsciously, but somehow leaving a lasting impression on a person and having the tendency to come true. Mother's vision of her son's tragic death is so bright, detailed and emotionally realistic that both the mother and the reader have no doubt about it being true. This dream is a catalyst to the subtextual suggestion of the story, it enhances and at the same time rounds off the right emotional state the reader should enter.

Equally important in the story is a kind of implicit meaning which could be called philosophical-ethical subtext. This subtext is meant to convey to the reader certain universal human (as well as humane) issues, moral values and principals, often through the prism of a conflict, injustice, confrontation. In most cases it is the problem of good and evil, right or wrong. In «Only This» Dahl ingeniously devised this kind of subtext via a set of stylistic means typical of implicit meaning creation. The first

thing worth mentioning is a universal stylistic device called «the principle of contrast». Since the beginning of the story the reader is confronted with the contrastive description of the setting. This contrast is observed both at the level of emotional description and at the physical, material level. Since the beginning of the narration Dahl opposes quiet, somehow «indifferent» nature to the anxiety and restlessness of the mother. Also, the author cunningly uses the colour juxtaposition of black and white. It can be seen in the contrast of frost and snow covering the hedges and the field grass to the darkness of the night. Then it comes with slight details: the picture of her son in a black frame, mother's black shoes on the floor and the brightness of the moonlight coming into the room. The contrast can be also found on a broader scale: the night and the winter representing fear, despair and loneliness are contrasted to the mother's loving heart radiating warmth and hope. Yet, the contrastive conflict of the story fully comes to the fore in the episode where the pilot is in the raid, the plane is detected by the enemy and the pilot tries to get his plane out of the danger zone. Interestingly enough, the color paradigm in the episode is quite the opposite: the son's aircraft is «like a great, black bird», while the enemy's searchlights are «long white fingers of light» as well as bright flashes of shells and the flak «in a thick multicoloured curtain». This logical discrepancy suggests a subtextual idea that the war is not the battle of black and white, right or wrong, good and evil; it is always about ruining somebody's family, breaking somebody's love, frustrating somebody's hopes. The war is always about things or ideas and it is never about somebody's life, though there is nothing more important and more precious than human existence, and war is the tool that ruthlessly takes it away.

The last but not least kind of subtext embedded in the story «Only This» is the «leitmotif» subtext, which is an implicit message or idea manifested not only in a particular fiction piece of a writer but also typical of other works created by them. The leitmotif can be expressed both explicitly and implicitly, sometimes both ways are used in one and the same text to highlight the writer's message. «Only This» is an example of the latter, as anti-war motif is clearly seen in a number of works by Roald Dahl. More than that, the leitmotif of the short story complements the subtextual idea expressed in the philosophical-ethic subtext, that is of an individual destroyed by the crucible of war. The leitmotif unambiguously hints at the war affair as a tragedy of millions of people, of the humanity scale. Explicitly, the story is focused on a particular story of a particular family, on the emotional bond and tragedy of the mother and her son. The war itself is described as if incidentally, with the help of artistic details. First, the war is mentioned in connection with abandoned fields («many of the fields were under the plough because of the war»). Next, the mentioning of the army «marching in the sky». And then people realizing the war is at its height and they can only dread and hope for the day it is over («All along the route people had heard the noise and knew what it was»). And finally, the description of the bombers' raid («There were many hundreds of them (searchlights)... all the time searching the night for the bombers which were moving in on a target»). The war is shown to desert places, devastate souls, destroy machines and kill incessantly. It is an affair which brings fear, despair, pain, destruction and death to anyone and anything involved in it. The deeper sense of the story is that the war is the absolute evil, devouring everything and everyone on its way. There is an additional proof to the message: the author never uses any names or any specification. In the painfully touching and tragic story of the mother and her son, there is never a name as well as the words «son» or «mother» referring to the characters. It is only once, describing the son's photograph the author says that it is «the kind that one likes to send to one's mother», so this is only «one's mother» and nothing more. This leads the reader to feel the multitude of lives lost in a senseless and merciless slaughter of war. The enemies are not mentioned either: there are no countries or nationalities specified, no evaluative descriptions used. The tone is always neutral, impersonal, even unemotional. All of that understatement contributes to the implicit idea of the war as of an impersonal universal phenomenon, which could involve virtually everyone, yet, likewise could bring sufferings and death to everyone. The war has no name, no color, no material shell, it is the thing which is itself the opposite to life, to the humanity, to the existence, and this message is the final and the utmost chord of the leitmotif subtext by Roald Dahl.

As we have previously mentioned, subtext of any literary work is mostly generated by a set of stylistic means which are more often than not responsible for the creation and functioning of the hidden plane of the text [7]. One of those important devices is the title of the story, which is, as a rule, a subject of subtext interpretations. The title of «Only This» is no exception. Moreover, it performs a few important subtextual functions. On a cursory reading one might wonder why there is seemingly no connection of the title to the story, at least at a lexical level. At this point, by the way, we come across another typically subtextual stylistic device, a riddle, which is normally a question (asked indirectly) the author deliberately sets to the reader and the answer to the question lies not on the surface of the text but in its implicit plane. So, to find it out, a curious and thoughtful is forced to go deeper into the text and explore its hidden meanings. In this case «deep», contemplative reading may come at hand. There is no exact phrase coining the title, similarly there is no direct explanation or interpretation of it. However, if we follow the clues given by the author we discover interesting modulations of the title phrase. First it comes to the fore in the episode where the mother was peering into the night sky hoping to spot her son's aircraft, yet all that she saw was «*only* the bright moon and the stars». Later «she felt *only* a great loneliness and a great fear» and «she saw *only* the depth of the sky». In all these contexts «only» refers to what the woman could see or feel, but in fact it emphasizes what she had not: her son beside her. And if we remember the contrast the writer set between the indifferent nature and the mother's heart broken with grief, the reference becomes clear. Another modulation chain has a more direct link to the title: the woman painfully recalls the memories of the past when her child was with her («It was not easy having *only* one child», «there was nothing else to live *except this*», «She could think of nothing at all *except that* she must see him»). The writer clearly shows that this «only» thing is to have your child by your side, to know that they are safe and well, to realize that they will live happily ever after. In the broader sense «only this» matters in every person's life: to live in peace, love and faith in tomorrow. We could see the way the title being transformed into the artistic detail brought different subtext meanings together, highlighted and intensified meaningful vectors directed into the text's depth.

In terms of complexity of the title's interpretation, we can not say about the importance of right subtext analyses for the adequacy of the text translation, as it is vital to take into account the implicit plane of a literary work and the stylistic means responsible for its creation. It seems reasonable to identify associative networks of those stylistic devices, interpret their functionality and semantic vectors they build up, then and then only one might proceed with the text translation.

**Conclusions and further research prospects.** Let us summaries the most important provisions of the research. A highly artistic literary text is endowed with an implicit meaning. However, it is frequently the case when the work possesses a few subtextual meanings of different kinds depending on the mechanism of their creation, the function they have in the text as well as on the writer's idiosyncrasy. These multifaceted versatile subtext contributes to the literary work artistry as it sometimes intensifies the explicit message of the text and sometimes creates new meanings which provide the work with artistic depth. Several subtexts can overlap intensifying each other's meanings. There are traditional stylistic means which are responsible for the implicit meaning creation. Those are various types of repetitions, modulation, artistic details, associative networks. Several kinds of stylistic devices build up a so-called semantic vector which directs the reader's thoughts onto a certain implicit idea. Yet, there are less typical devices which are capable of creating subtexts, often those are allusions and intertextual links. A special attention in the literary text with deep subtextual meaning should be given to the title, as its interpretation can facilitate the process of subtext identification and comprehension. Understanding the mechanisms of implicit meaning creation and functioning is an important stage in the process of a literary text translation. Accurate identification of the implicit meanings as well as of the stylistic means creating those subtext could considerably improve translation accuracy and adequacy of literary texts.

The given research can prompt further studies into the nature and role of the subtext not only in a given literary text but also in various literary works in order to better understand implicit patterns with different authors and in different literary genres. Those insights might be helpful for improving the quality of literary texts translation.

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