



INTERPRETATION OF THE CONCEPTOSPHERE AND MANIFESTATION OF THE CONCEPTS IN THE NOVELS OF DORIS LESSING

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Abstract:

The article examines the scientific work of scientists in the theoretical interpretation of the concept sphere. The concepts are examined in the early short prose of Doris Lessing. Analysis of the concepts “nature” and “man” made it possible to identify their dual nature, which reflected the author’s vision of the colonial world of Doris Lessing’s prose. Separately, the difference in the perception of nature between children and adults in the early stories of the writer was examined.

Keywords: concept, notion, context, concept “nature”, concept “man”, internal space of a work of art, Doris Lessing.

Introduction

The most important concept of cognitive linguistics is the concept of the concept sphere - a field of knowledge composed of concepts. This term was introduced into science by D.S. Likhachev, who defined it as: “the totality of concepts of a nation, it is formed by all the potentialities of the concepts of native speakers. The conceptual sphere of a people is wider than the semantic sphere represented by the meanings of words in a language. The concept and the concept sphere are mental entities, and modern scientific research confirms their fundamental function in the process of nonverbal communication. Research shows that the concept sphere and the concepts included in it are quite orderly in nature” [Likhachev, 1997: 285].

V.V. Krasnykh, when studying the concept of the concept sphere, uses the term “cognitive space” and distinguishes “individual cognitive space - a certain structured collection of knowledge and ideas, which any linguistic personality, every speaker, possesses, and the collective cognitive space is a certain structured body of knowledge and ideas that all individuals belonging to a particular society necessarily possess” [Krasnykh, 2003: 61].

Studying the “conceptosphere of the text” of each of the novels makes it possible to see the dynamics of the development of concepts, the dominance of one of them in the discourse, to analyze the cognitive layer of the concept, the evaluative component, and the filling of the interpretive field in each of the novels under study. Sh.S. Safarov





writes about the importance of studying the personal factor in discourse: “Therefore, it seems quite timely for pragmalinguistics to turn to the study of the personal factor, namely: to the relationship between the structure of the individual’s cognitive network and its discursive activity, which allows us to consider discourse as a product of cognitive-linguistic activity not an abstract, averagely understood person, but a concrete individual”[Safarov, 2008: 139], [Amanullaeva.2020: 53-56].

The “concept” was first developed in the article by S. A. Askoldov-Alekseev “Concept and Word” (1928): “A concept is a mental formation that replaces for us in the process of thought an indefinite set of objects of the same kind” [Askoldov-Alekseev 5: 269].

S. A. Askoldov distinguishes between cognitive and artistic concepts (“the concepts of knowledge are communal; the concepts of art are individual... Feelings, desires, and generally irrational things are not mixed into the concepts of knowledge. An artistic concept is most often a complex of both, i.e. a combination of concepts, ideas, feelings, emotions”), focuses on their differences (“the most significant difference between artistic concepts and cognitive ones is ... the uncertainty of possibilities”), defines the framework of these differences “in concepts of knowledge, possibilities are subordinated either to the requirement of compliance with real reality, or laws of logic. The connection between the elements of the artistic concept is based on a completely alien logic and real pragmatics of artistic associativity...” [Askoldov-Alekseev 5: 274–275].

Several decades later, in the early 90s of the twentieth century, D. S. Likhachev, in his work “The Conceptosphere of the Russian Language,” developed and supplemented S. A. Askoldov-Alekseev’s provisions on the concept, giving them an updated and modernized sound. According to Likhachev, the concept “does not arise from the meaning of the word (as “hints at possible meanings”), but is the result of a collision of the dictionary meaning of the word with the personal and folk experience of a person” [Likhachev D. S. 6: 152], at the same time, the concept is “the richer the richer the national, estate, class, professional, family and personal experience of the person using the concept” [Likhachev D.S. 6: 154]. D. S. Likhachev defines the important role of context in the functioning of the concept: “Concepts, being basically universal, simultaneously contain many possible deviations and additions, but within the context [Likhachev D.S. 6:154] [Amanullayeva 7: 180], while “each concept, in essence, can be deciphered differently depending on the momentary context and cultural experience, the cultural individuality of the concept bearer” [Likhachev D.S. 6:155].

The logical conclusion of the scientist’s reasoning is the discovery of the concept sphere: “The concepts of individual meanings of words, which depend on each other,





constitute certain wholes and which we define as the concept sphere... The conceptual sphere of a national language is richer the richer the entire culture of a nation is - its literature, folklore, science, fine arts... writers play a special role in creating the concept sphere..." [Likhachev D.S. 6:154–157]. Subsequent research by scientists at the end of the 20th and beginning of the 21st centuries expanded and deepened the concept of the concept in modern science. So Yu.S. Stepanov identifies two of its components: 1) "a concept is like a clot of culture in the human mind; that in the form of which culture enters the mental world of a person" and 2) "a concept is that through which a person - an ordinary, ordinary person, not a "creator of cultural values" - himself enters into culture, and in some cases influences it "[Stepanov Yu.S.8:43].

Further, in his linguocultural understanding of the concept, Yu.S. Stepanov draws attention to three more of its aspects: 1) "concepts are not only thought, they are experienced. They are the subject of emotions, likes and dislikes, and sometimes clashes. The concept is the main cell of culture in the mental world of man"; 2) "the concept has a complex structure. On the one hand, everything that belongs to the structure of the concept belongs to it; on the other hand, the structure of the concept includes everything that makes it a fact of culture - the original form (etymology); history condensed to the main features of the content; modern associations; grades, etc." [3:43]; 3) "the concept has three components, or three "layers": (1) the main, relevant feature; (2) additional, or several additional, "passive" features that are no longer relevant, "historical"; (3) internal form, usually not at all conscious, imprinted in external, verbal form" [Stepanov Yu.S.8:46]. Artistic concepts are clearly manifested in the works of the British writer Doris Lessing. Doris May Lessing is an English writer, winner of the Nobel Prize in Literature 2007. Feminist. Author of 5 novels from the "Canopus in Argos" series (1979-1983), containing different interpretations of the philosophical problems of the passive participation of weak humanity in the struggle of powerful civilizations.

Among the numerous problems of Doris Lessing's early prose, the themes of understanding man and the surrounding nature dominate. Features of the artistic embodiment of these problems in the works of early short prose by D. Lessing is the purpose of this article. The relationship between nature and man in the stories of the African period by Doris Lessing determines the internal space of the work of art, becomes key aspects of the development of the plot, significantly influences the formation and development of the characters, and constitutes the very essence of the author's intention.

Therefore, we can talk about the appearance of the concepts "nature" and "man" in the early prose of D. Lessing. "African Stories" by D. Lessing is based on her personal





life experience. Her childhood years spent on a farm near Benketa in Southern Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) in the late 20s and early 30s provided rich material for the future writer's subsequent understanding of African realities. At that time, Africa was imagined as a vast expanse of pristine, undeveloped land. E. Chennelis, in *Doris Lessing: The Rhodesian Novelist* (1985), writes: "The myth of the empty, unformed land appears in much of the colonial literature of the earliest British settlements...Its universality lies in the fact that the empty earth can be transformed into the mythopoeics of proto-myths of Eden or the Golden Age, where man lived in harmony with himself and his environment, sparing nothing and striving for nothing" [Chennells A. 9 : 4].

However, this was not an empty wild land without people. In the case of Rhodesia, E. Chennells points out: "In 1890 the country was quite heavily populated, and the early pioneers had difficulty finding land that was not already used for fields or grazing" [Chennells A. 9: 4]. However, the myth of the empty land persists. E. Hunter, in *Feminism, Islam and the Modern Moroccan Woman in the Works Leila Abouzeid*, points out: "The idea was promoted that the earth was empty, and even when it was not completely empty it was believed that it needs "taming" and must be supported by the white colonialists of South Africa" [Hunter E. 10: 35]. Uncultivated land was considered something that needed to be changed, overcome, fought with, transformed with the help of representatives of the empire. Thus, we can say that long before Doris Lessing entered literature, the concept of "nature" with a certain content had already been formed in society - "pristine nature", "wild nature", which must be tamed, bridled like a wild horse. The title of the first volume of D. Lessing's *African Stories* - "It Was the Chief's Old Country" - indicates that the writer was well aware that the land was inhabited before the arrival of settlers. However, E. Chennelis believes that she (Lessing) agreed with some aspects of this myth, moreover, they were acceptable to her, because "she seems to have identified herself with the settlers who saw in the empty land an opportunity for self-realization and for the free development of personality, all that could not be achieved in England or even in the cities of Rhodesia" [Chennells A. 9: 4]. Lessing brings the settlers closer to their quest for adventure, an element that is missing in England and the cities of Africa. The wildness of the area, its incomprehensibility, the excitement and risk of exploring it - everything that is necessary for real adventures. Although Lessing acknowledges the falsity and inadequacy of the myth of the empty land, she recognizes that there is an element of primordial and wildness in this area that challenges, frightens, but attracts settlers. In his stories, the author shows that this phenomenon is observed even on farms with cultivated land. It is safe to say that the concept of "nature" in D. Lessing's stories





receives its first shade of primordially, wildness (the first component or layer according to Yu.S. Stepanov) from the linguocultural and historical features that have developed in society. Thus, close attention to the concept of “nature” allows us not only to analyze Lessing’s position in relation to the natural world, but also: 1) to consider the ways in which the writer depicts the wilderness and wilderness of Africa, and through this, present a complete and complex picture of settler society in her stories; 2) see how the author shows different types of relationships between settlers and the African wilderness, and how this characterizes them (which actualizes the appeal to the concept of “man”); 3) identify the differences between settlers and indigenous people, first of all, in relations with nature (which actualizes the appeal to the concept of “man”) 4) determine what value this wilderness and the place of humans have for Doris Lessing, i.e. identify the role and meaning of the concepts “nature” and “man” in the early stories of D. Lessing. Nature and man in Doris Lessing’s stories are in constant interaction and, as a rule, are the leading forces that determine the development of the plot. At the same time, the primary component of the concept of “nature” - pristineness, wildness, unbridledness - can be applied to people themselves. Lessing’s concept of “man” always has a dual character, opposition: “settler” - “indigenous”. Each of them also has a dual possible reading: “settler” – “civilized”/“colonial”; “native” – “original inhabitant”/“savage”. Each of the two varieties of the concept “person” has its own characteristic features. Thus, some of the settlers depicted in Lessing’s works refuse to stay in the house for a long time and prefer to wander in the bush under the starry sky, “subjugating the wild nature.” And the indigenous people, although they live in their own homes, differ from the settlers in their closeness to the natural environment. Their knowledge of wild plants, for example, can be seen in the story “No Witchcraft for Sale” (1951), in which the servant Gideon heals the eyes of a boy with plants from the bush. Gideon perceives the “bush” not as an unknown wilderness, but as familiar territory. The component of wildness, unbridledness in the concept of “nature” in the meaning of “uncivilized” is introduced into Africa by the culture of the settlers, thereby marking the prospects of the continent in terms of development, being a reflection of the experience of the settler. As we can see, it is the colonial context of the stories that introduces into the concept of “nature” a component of the pristine wildness of the environment, thereby reflecting one of the goals of colonial policy - “taming”, “curbing” a given wilderness in order to bring it under control. Thanks to the component of pristine wildness of the environment, the concept of “nature” in the works of D. Lessing becomes one of the most important aspects of the depiction of the colonial world. Through the description of the settlers’ relationship with nature and the surrounding world, the author





manages to recreate the mentality of modern colonialists, show their true attitude towards Africa, destroying the settler stereotype created in society. Thus, Lessing's use of the concept of "nature" makes it possible to see the weaknesses of settler society and demonstrates its complexity and ambiguity. The author's position reflects D. Lessing's critical attitude towards many aspects of the life of white settlers. The concept of "nature" in D. Lessing is presented in the form of a complex complex: pictures describing nature are presented through the narrator, who focuses attention on them in the text. At the same time, descriptions of nature are mediated by the complex structure of primary reality, which in turn conveys important information about the narrator and those characters who fall into the focus of the narrative. Their perception and appreciation of the natural environment provide clear ideas about their origins and cultural values. Thus, the concept "nature" modulates various manifestations of the concept "man". This was confirmed by an interview with D. Lessing in 1964, in which she insists that her stories raise not only the problem of the "colored population", but also the problem of the impact of the natural world on the human world: "Then I wrote short stories that took place in the area where I grew up, in which isolated white farmers lived at great distances from each other ... People who could be absolutely ordinary residents in a society similar to English society, traditions which they were obliged to conform to, could become completely wild eccentrics, which they would not have dared to be in another place" [Ingersoll E. G 11: 3]. The concept of "nature" as a complex complex reflected Lessing's understanding of the problem of the influence of geographic space on the character, attitude and behavior of a person, which influenced the ways of depicting the first settlers in her stories. There is always a complex connection and mutual conditionality between the concepts of "nature" and "man". Getting from the limited space of England to the vast expanses of Africa sometimes led settlers to abandon internal space as a whole.

Extensive spaces could provide opportunity for adventure, or cause a feeling of insecurity, so they tried to limit their space, thereby isolating themselves from the rest of Africa. At the same time, children in D. Lessing's stories are, as a rule, freer from prejudices, more open to the environment and, like adventure lovers, more ready to go into unknown areas. This is confirmed by the story "Sunrise on the Veld" ("A S Whittaker R.unrise on the Veld", 1951), in which events are perceived through the eyes of a boy of fifteen who gets up early in the morning and goes into the bush with a gun and a dog to see the sunrise ..R. Whittaker, speaking about the position of the child in Lessing's stories, makes an important remark: "Some of the "African Stories" are written from the perspective of a child or teenager, showing their openness to the world around them, through their eyes we see the beauty of the rising dawn, we are





filled with their sensations from contact with unfamiliar but beautiful nature” [Whittaker R. 12: 29]. The boy in Lessing's story sets out on a journey at dawn of the coming day: «As soon as he stepped over the lintel, the flesh of his sales contracted on the chilled earth, and his legs began to ache with cold. It was night the stars were glittering, the trees standing black and still. He looked for signs of day, for the greying of the edge of a stone, or a lightening in the sky where the sun would rise, but there was nothing yet. Alert as an animal he crept past the dangerous window, standing poised with his hand on the sill for one proudly fastidious moment, looking in at the stuffy blackness of the room where his parents lay» [Lessing D. 13: 27]. “As soon as he crossed the threshold of the house, he felt the cold of the ground, and his legs began to ache from the cold. It was night, the stars sparkled, the trees stood black and did not move. He saw the first signs of the coming day, the graying edges of the stones, the brightening sky only in the place where the sun was rising, the rest around still showed no signs of life. Being on the alert, like a wild animal, he crept past the dangerous window, rested his hands firmly on the windowsill, looking into the stuffy dark room where his parents slept” [trans. - our]. The author conveys the boy's primary contact with nature through physical sensations. Despite the fact that it is a winter morning outside, the boy consciously exposes himself to the test of the cold that surrounds him in the outside world. [Savina V.V. 14:213] The author records his sensations by describing aching pain in various parts of the child's body, showing that in this situation he behaves with a sense of clear awareness of what is happening and the accuracy of his movements and actions. It is necessary to note the sharp difference in the above passage between the condition of the boy and his parents. While they sleep, lying in their room in the “stifling darkness,” he breathes the cool, fresh air of the early morning, and “the stars shine” above his head. Adults do not pay attention to the subtle change in light, the “grey edge of the stone,” which is a sign to the boy that dawn is coming. Lessing focuses attention in the story on the double oppositions of the perception of nature: the boy's living connection with nature and the deadened and dull perception of adults who are in a built, comfortable house, fenced off from the surrounding nature. Locked in the “stuffy darkness” of the room, they do not participate in the life of nature, and do not perceive the miracle of the return of light early in the morning. Unlike them, the boy observes the processes of changing nature in detail and feels the joy of this acquaintance with nature. Thus, nature becomes his ally, unlike his parents, over whom he feels superior. This is shown in his demeanor when he proudly pauses for a short moment before leaving, placing his hand on the windowsill, as if challenging his parents, who were probably against his trips. He makes a conscious choice between nature with its wilderness and home with its





economy. Thus, a child's perception of nature is different than that of his parents (adults), thanks to which the concept of "nature" is filled with a new component - pristine beauty, freshness of the surrounding world, without any intention to "subdue" or "curb" it. And the concept of "man" also acquires a new component - the joy of merging and unifying with nature, the mood for cooperation, and not for conquest. In the article "The Worldview of Doris Lessing: Wild Africa," E. Bertelsen traces two different approaches to Lessing's interpretation of the natural principle. Nature is interpreted as "an initially pure, untouched place, unspoiled by various methods of suppression and the conventions of "civilized" society, and at the same time hostile, irrational and disordered, a source of formidable and destructive energy" [Bertelsen E. 15: 650]. At the end of the work, we come to the conclusion that: 1. In the collection of stories "African Stories," the most vivid picture of the diverse relationships between people and the surrounding nature unfolds before readers. The complexity and multidimensionality of the artistic solution to these relationships allowed us to identify two key concepts of D. Lessing's early short prose – the concept of "nature" and the concept of "man". 2. The concept of "nature" has a pronounced dual character: the author, on the one hand, defends a positive view of nature: an untouched region that has not been subjected to barbaric intervention is contrasted with a negative analogue - "civilized" society; on the other hand, the view that nature is hostile and destructive implies that society, in contrast, is orderly, rational and constructive. 3. The concept of "man" has a double coding: firstly, it is divided into settlers and local residents, secondly, each of these categories is divided into two varieties: "settler" - "civilized" / "colonial"; "native" – "original inhabitant"/"savage". The author's subsequent plans include further research into the specifics of Doris Lessing's short prose.

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