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QUESTION-ANSWER THEMATIC UNITS IN NOBEL LECTURES DELIVERED BY PRIZEWINNERS IN THE FIELD OF LITERATURE

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The article provides a detailed structural, content, pragmatic, and stylistic examination of question-answer thematic entities (units) in Nobel lectures. A method of linguistic description and observation and a contextual-interpretation method are used in the research. The author has defined the compositional role of these units on the paragraph level demonstrating that they function as an attention-getter at the beginning, as a "springboard" for further discussion in the middle, and as a clincher in the final position. Four ways of their internal organization have been identified taking into consideration the correlation and order of questions and answers blocks; different types of questions are used. The study has distinguished seven rhetorical modes of content delivery, namely cause-effect, problem-solution, contrast-comparison, classification (division), process analysis, description, and exemplification. Typical syntactic stylistic devices have been also analysed and literature laureates masterfully combine various kinds of them to make their speeches colourful and persuasive. The approach to the linguistic material based on studying speakers' ethical strategies reveals that question-answer thematic entities are a widely-used method to build pathos (a rhetoric category) in the lecture. The potential of the discussed units to intensify lecture coherence and imply a dialogue with the audience is stressed. This article further develops the author's previous research in this field that was devoted to specifying the ways the image of a writer is rendered in Nobel lectures; moreover, close connection between the content of the lecture and the laureate's social, moral, professional, political, religious, and aesthetic values was proven.

Keywords: *the Nobel lecture, structural analysis, a content component, coherence, a rhetorical mode, a syntactic stylistic device, pathos, dialogicity.*

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ТЕМАТИЧНІ БЛОКИ ПИТАННЯ - ВІДПОВІДЬ В НОБЕЛІВСЬКИХ ЛЕКЦІЯХ ЛАУРЕАТІВ У ГАЛУЗІ ЛІТЕРАТУРИ

Л. І. Павленко

У статті докладно досліджено структурні, змістові, прагматичні та стилістичні аспекти питально-відповідних тематичних єдностей (блоків) у Нобелівських лекціях. У процесі дослідження застосовано метод лінгвістичного опису та спостереження й контекстуально-інтерпретаційний метод. Автор визначає композиційну роль цих блоків на рівні параграфа та демонструє, що вони можуть функціонувати як засіб привернення уваги на початку, як своєрідний "трамплін" для подальшого обговорення в середині та як вирішальний аргумент у кінцевій позиції. Описано 4 способи їх внутрішньої організації на основі кореляції та порядку запитань і відповідей; встановлено, що використано всі типи запитань. У статті виділено 7 риторичних моделей подання інформації, а саме: причина-наслідок, проблема-рішення, протиставлення-порівняння, класифікація (розподіл), аналіз процесу, опис, екземпліфікація.

Проаналізовано також типові синтаксичні стилістичні засоби. Лауреати майстерно поєднують їх різні види, щоб зробити свої виступи яскравими та переконливими. Вивчення моральних стратегій мовців як способів аналізу мовного матеріалу свідчить про те, що питально-відповідні тематичні єдності широко використовують для побудови пафосу (риторичної категорії) в лекції. Підкреслено потенціал зазначених єдностей для посилення когерентності лекції та створення імпліцитного діалогу з аудиторією. Стаття є подальшим дослідженням автора в цій галузі; попередні розвідки були присвячені визначенню способів відображення образу письменника в Нобелівських лекціях; крім того, було доведено тісний зв'язок між змістовим наповненням лекції та соціальними, моральними, професійними, політичними, релігійними та естетичними цінностями лауреата.

Ключові слова: Нобелівська лекція, структурний аналіз, змістова складова, когерентність, риторична модель, синтаксичний стилістичний засіб, пафос, діалогічність.

Problem statement. Discussing the egocentric character of verbal (speech) activity performed by a speaker, linguists stress the importance of social environment and the modifying addressee (listener) factor due to which the text acquires corresponding syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic features [9: 48-49]. A Nobel lecture as a specific genre of public speaking vividly demonstrates this duality by interconnection of individual and social factors. The individuality of a writer reveals itself not only in the way he employs the repertoire of linguistic means of the given language but also in the choice of topics covered in the lecture. Our previous research in this field demonstrated that laureates discuss the range of various issues from the writing process itself to urgent global affairs. We established clear correlation between the official

justification of the award and the content of the lecture. Prizewinners use the award ceremony as a powerful platform to attract attention to social, moral, political, and religious issues thus making notable input to molding a public opinion.

The logical compositional structure of any public presentation, relevant content, reliable supporting materials, a reasonable proportion of emotional and rational components, and skilful delivery, undoubtedly, contribute to the success of the speech. Various approaches have been proposed to study linguistic tools to transfer a powerful message, among which we can name rhetorical topoi [16], literary autonomy and literary canons [17], or genre-stylistic features [5].

Theoretical background. Previous works focused mainly either on one definite lecture [18] or on some definite

aspect [10]. A recent review of the literature on this subject made it possible to single out the detailed research devoted to the Nobel laureates in literature of the African diaspora [13]. L. Creque overviews their Nobel lectures claiming the importance of historical re-enactment, the language and the literary commitment of the writer in the diaspora, concluding that the cultural contribution of these authors to the world literature is notable due to the inherent value of the narrative itself that is unpredictable and astonishing. The topics thoroughly described in their works covered everyday concerns of the post-colonial African continent in the twentieth century and interrelationship of its inhabitants with representatives of other cultural backgrounds. The significance of this recognition is hard to overestimate as African Diaspora laureates neither belong to European community nor consider English their mother tongue [13: 11]. Another work which is worth mentioning provides a thorough analysis of twenty 1990–2009 Nobel lectures in literature with the purpose to detect different manifestations of literary autonomy [17]. The author discusses Nobelists' childhood recollections and literary vocation, their vision of literature as a medium in the technologically changing world, the relationship between the recognized literary canon and ancient oral story-telling tradition. The defence of freedom of expression is considered an unambiguous characteristic of literary autonomy though it is stressed that the above-mentioned lectures demonstrate more prudence in political issues than resistance (except O. Paz, D. Fo, and H. Pinter). Notably, both studies underline the growing connection between local and global literary traditions.

However, there is still a need for an integrated investigation of Nobel lectures in structural, semantic, pragmatic, and stylistic aspects. The

present paper is an attempt to cover above-mentioned aspects.

The **aim** of this article is to provide an in-depth examination of question-answer thematic entities (units) in Nobel lectures as one of the most powerful ways to deliver the message. Our sample consists of 14 lectures delivered by laureates in literature whose prizewinning texts were written in English; the full texts are available at https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/literature/laureates/.

Results and discussion. For ease of analysis, a formal minimal text fragment taken under consideration is a paragraph which is understood as a set of sentences centred around one idea and graphically indented [1: 269]. We also use the theoretical findings of a famous linguist I. Galperin about supra-phrasal units as text constituents in our research [3: 67-73].

Firstly, question-answer thematic entities are examined to define their role **to structure** the paragraph. Such units are used at the beginning and function as effective attention-getters. In our opinion, question-answer units in the middle of a paragraph serve as a "springboard" for further discussion, often from another angle. Unexpectedly, the research detected that questions are widely employed at the end of paragraphs being a memorable ending, concluding remarks, or a clincher. Of particular interest in this respect is the Nobel lecture by J. Coetzee who uses different types of questions at the end as a form of inner speech.

Secondly, the structural analysis revealed a complicated internal organization of such units with varied combination of different types of questions, for example:

1. one question is followed by a developed answer:

What is the earthly paradise for our visitors? Two weeks without rain and a mahogany tan, and, at sunset, local troubadours in straw hats and floral shirts beating "Yellow Bird"

and "Banana Boat Song" to death. There is a territory wider than this – wider than the limits made by the map of an island – which is the illimitable sea and what it remembers (Walcott).

2. a set of questions is followed by a developed answer:

The British, ever cooperative, are intending to replace their own nuclear missile, Trident. Who, I wonder, are they aiming at? Osama bin Laden? You? Me? Joe Dokes? China? Paris? Who knows? What we do know is that this infantile insanity – the possession and threatened use of nuclear weapons – is at the heart of present American political philosophy. We must remind ourselves that the United States is on a permanent military footing and shows no sign of relaxing it (Pinter).

3. a set of questions is followed by a one-sentence answer:

But who does not know of literature banned because it is interrogative; discredited because it is critical; erased because alternate? And how many are outraged by the thought of a self-ravaged tongue? Word-work is sublime, she thinks, because it is generative; it makes meaning that secures our difference, our human difference – the way in which we are like no other life (Morrison).

4. a set of questions is interchanged with a set of answers (single cases in our sample).

We consider that questions in the discussed thematic units effectively strengthen the lecture **coherence**. They enable laureates to discuss a range of topics that are vitally important for them and express deep concern about these issues. The notion of coherence is in the focus of linguistic studies [15; 7; 8]. For the purposes of this research, we understand it as "...the underlying functional connectedness or identity of a piece of spoken or written language (text, discourse). It involves the study of

such factors as the language users' knowledge of the world, the inferences they make, and the assumptions they hold" [14: 85]; while communicating ideas, there is an obligatory condition to consider any text coherent, namely, written or spoken interaction participants' societal cumulative knowledge about customs, norms, values, attitudes, language, symbols and other aspects [12: 85]. The selected examples show that similar viewpoints and experience in different spheres mentioned above can include not only general outlook but also more specific professional writers' background. A question-answer thematic unit can be based on laureate's inferences and assumptions integrating diverse components. It must be noted that linguists who study coherence as a pragmatically-conditioned notion highlight the quantity and quality of the shared background knowledge as a guarantee of successful cooperation in discourse [15: 82-84].

Further investigation of the **content** indicates that with the help of such verbal units, Nobel lecturers can introduce their personal vision (or definition) of some notions or explain different logical relationships. For example, in his "The Antilles: Fragments of Epic Memory", Derek Walcott answers his question about "the proportions of the ideal Caribbean city". Notably, this individual perception of a city developed in the answer part of a unit contains 297 words and it is stylistically intensified with parallel constructions. W. Golding suggests his interpretation of "a novel" structurally built in a form of short special questions (*What goes with it? What of that?*) and a set of extended simple declarative sentences as a developed answer. On the other hand, a set of general questions with an anaphoric element (*Is it not*) introduces B. Russell's understanding of "condemnation". Therefore, writers can

follow different structural patterns to strengthen their message.

Speaking about logical patterns used, we detected the variety of **rhetorical modes**: cause-effect, problem-solution, contrast-comparison, classification (division), process analysis, description, exemplification.

The careful semantic analysis of question-answer thematic entities proves our hypothesis that they can serve as a powerful means to encourage audience's interest and sympathy, to arouse listeners' emotional connection to the content, and to engage their attitudes, beliefs, values, or needs, thus making an appeal to pathos. One of the acknowledged ways to build pathos is to use vivid, sensory words; vocabulary with emotional emphasis; analogies and metaphors, the striking example of which is found in the next fragment:

Wherein then lies the surprise that we, the victims of that intellectual dishonesty of others, demand from that world that is finally coming to itself, a measure of expiation? Demand that it rescues it self, by concrete acts, from the stigma of being the wilful parent of a monstrosity... (Soyinka)

Question-answer thematic units as rhetoric means of pathos express laureates' concern about the role of literature and writers' social duty under the influence of technological changes, new media, or political factors (e.g. D. Lessing, K. Ishiguro, N. Gordimer, T. Morrison, W. Golding).

An emotionally coloured personal anecdote as another way to bring pathos in the speech is also used by Nobelists while sharing their reflections on troublesome issues. In this respect, the discussed thematic entities enhance a dialogic character of the lecture. For example, K. Ishiguro widely applies this approach to speak about personal memories and memories of a nation. The excerpts from his speech where sets of questions are interchanged with sets of answers are aimed at evoking sensitive feedback. Carefully selected

vocabulary (e.g. *to rot away; relics of evil; tame museum exhibits; burden of remembering; wilful amnesia*) intensifies the effect.

A British playwright H. Pinter, whose speech provoked much comment and debate, vividly shows his straightforward active citizenship with an uncompromising vision of power and war, his sincere and deep concern for the victims of any violence, his belief in the moral superiority and sensibility of a common man. In our opinion, his whole lecture is a powerful appeal to pathos where he masterly demonstrates his writing expertise and deliberately chooses lexical and grammatical means to deliver his message among which question-answer thematic entities are widely used.

Based on the comprehensive classification by I. Arnold [1: 217-262], our study also provides a **stylistic analysis on the syntactic level** and identifies a set of devices employed, namely, inversion, rhetorical questions, expressive negation, transposition (single cases in our sample), anaphora, anadiplosis (single cases in our sample), semantic repetition, ellipsis, syntactic convergence (single cases in our sample). Nobel laureates, being renowned writers themselves, skillfully combine various stylistic devices in question-answer units to emphasize a certain component, to create dynamic description of events, and to make their speech colourful and persuasive:

anaphora, expressive negation, polysyndeton

... If it is the devil that tempts the young to enjoy themselves, is it not, perhaps, the same personage that persuades the old to condemn their enjoyment? And is not condemnation perhaps merely a form of excitement appropriate to old age? And is it not, perhaps, a drug which – like opium – has to be taken in continually stronger doses to produce the desired effect? Is it not to be feared that, beginning with the wickedness of the cinema, we should be

led step by step to condemn the opposite political party, dagoes, wops, Asiatics, and, in short, everybody except the fellow members of our club? And it is from just such condemnations, when widespread, that wars proceed. I have never heard of a war that proceeded from dance halls (Russel).

It is important to mention that combination of elliptical and complete sentences is a means of rhythmical organization of the question-answer entities, which highlights key elements, and helps to deliver information piece by piece:

... At present many are on hunger strike, being force-fed, including British residents. No niceties in these force-feeding procedures. No sedative or anaesthetic. Just a tube stuck up your nose and into your throat. You vomit blood. This is torture. What has the British Foreign Secretary said about this? Nothing. What has the British Prime Minister said about this? Nothing. Why not? Because the United States has said: to criticise our conduct in Guantanamo Bay constitutes an unfriendly act. You're either with us or against us. So Blair shuts up (Pinter)

If a dialogue can be defined as a multi-faceted communication act as a result of speaker-listener interaction based upon their intellectual, emotional, and social background [11: 158], then different types of questions also create a particular Nobel laureate's dialogue with the audience and implicitly involve listeners to communication. Moreover, these examples demonstrate some ways of creating dialogicity discussed in scientific studies of different types of discourse [2; 4; 6]. Personal pronouns "we", "you", "our", and imperatives directly address listeners, express this shared knowledge, and make them immediate participants of the lecture. Our close consideration of chosen examples make it possible to conclude that using a personal pronoun "we", speakers mean "I belong to the

community described in the speech", "I belong to the generation described in the speech", or "I belong to this audience". In such a manner, for instance, W. Soyinka tells about colonial and post-colonial Africa; D. Lessing expresses her worries about increasing power of internet; K. Ishiguro describes his post-war generation with optimism.

While conducting a content analysis of the selected illustrative material, we singled out rare but remarkable cases of intertextuality. Direct/indirect citation is incorporated into a question-answer unit and becomes its nucleus; the laureate can agree, disagree, and/or develop it further thus imitating his inner speech or implying the dialogue with the audience. References to notable literature representatives contribute to paragraph coherence in the following extract and professional belonging:

... Since the Twenties, how many novelists have taken a second look at D.H. Lawrence, or argued a different view of sexual potency or the effects of industrial civilization on the instincts? Literature has for nearly a century used the same stock of ideas, myths, strategies. "The most serious essayists of the last fifty years," says Robbe-Grillet. Yes, indeed. Essay after essay, book after book, confirm the most serious thoughts – Baudelairian, Nietzschean, Marxian, Psychoanalytic, etcetera, etcetera – of these most serious essayists... (Bellow).

We stated above that question-answer thematic units reinforce the coherence of the lecture addressing common backgrounds, either universal (common to all mankind) or more specific (related to professional literary sphere). From the point of rhetoric value, such a type of intertextuality can perform several functions: to add credibility to the ideas shared, to appeal to common experience and knowledge, and to be a starting point for a implicit dialogue. The examples from our

sample demonstrate that Nobelists mainly quote literary critique theorists (e.g. E.M. Forster, Robbe-Grillet's) or other writers (J. Joyce, J. Conrad).

Conclusions and research prospects. The research demonstrates that question-answer thematic units are widely used in this genre and exposes their structural-content potential. From the point of composition, these entities are equally used at the beginning, in the middle, and at the end of the paragraph. The authors utilize various rhetorical designs to deliver the message and employ diverse syntactic stylistic devices giving preference to anaphora, rhetorical questions, and parallelism. The obtained results confirm the hypothesis that these thematic entities enhance lecture coherence, and create an implicit dialogue with the audience; indeed, they are an effective way to influence public opinion.

We suggest that further studies should focus on the concept of intertextuality in Nobel lectures and the sample can include another subject area.

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