

LITERARY APHORISMS AS A MEANS OF FOREGROUNDING IN A LITERARY TEXT

Abstract. The article examines literary aphorisms as an effective means of foregrounding in literary texts from the perspective of cognitive stylistics. The object of the study is the cognitive-stylistic mechanisms of meaning actualization realized in aphoristic utterances. The aim of the study is to identify the functional features of literary aphorisms as a device of information highlighting and to determine their role in the cognitive organization of the text. The theoretical framework of the paper is based on the ideas of the Prague School, Russian formalism, and modern cognitive-stylistic approaches to foregrounding. The article clarifies the notion of foregrounding and discusses its main types and mechanisms, including deviation, parallelism, contrast, paradox, and stylistic convergence. Based on aphorisms by Oscar Wilde, George Orwell, a cognitive-stylistic analysis is carried out in order to reveal the stylistic, cognitive, pragmatic, and sociocultural functions of aphoristic utterances. The findings show that aphorisms function as prominent textual dominants, contribute to defamiliarization, facilitate concept formation, and intensify the reader's interpretative activity. The novelty of the study lies in the systematic treatment of the aphorism as a cognitively marked unit that realizes foregrounding through structural completeness, semantic compression, and stylistic expressiveness. The reliability of the findings is supported by established theoretical frameworks and a representative corpus of literary data. The practical significance of the study lies in its applicability to courses in stylistics, cognitive linguistics, and literary text analysis, as well as in the interpretation and translation of aphoristic expressions.

Keywords: aphorism; foregrounding; cognitive stylistics; deviation; parallelism; literary text; concept; stylistic convergence.

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**ЛИТЕРАТУРНЫЕ АФОРИЗМЫ
КАК СРЕДСТВО ВЫДВИЖЕНИЯ В ХУДОЖЕСТВЕННОМ ТЕКСТЕ**

Аннотация. В статье рассматриваются литературные афоризмы как эффективное средство выдвижения в художественном тексте с позиций когнитивной стилистики. Предметом исследования являются когнитивно-стилистические механизмы актуализации смысла, реализуемые в афористических высказываниях. Цель исследования заключается в

выявлении функциональных особенностей литературных афоризмов как приёма акцентирования информации, а также в определении их роли в когнитивной организации текста. В качестве теоретической основы работы выступают положения Пражской лингвистической школы, русской формальной школы, а также современные подходы когнитивной стилистики к феномену выдвигания. В статье уточняется понятие выдвигания, рассматриваются его основные типы и механизмы, включая языковую девиацию, параллелизм, контраст, парадокс и стилистическую конвергенцию. На материале афоризмов О. Уайльда, Дж. Оруэлла, У. Блейка, проводится когнитивно-стилистический анализ, позволяющий выявить стилистические, когнитивные, прагматические и социокультурные функции афористических высказываний. В результате исследования установлено, что афоризмы выступают значимыми текстовыми доминантами, способствуют деавтоматизации восприятия, формированию концептов и активизации интерпретационной деятельности читателя. Научная новизна исследования заключается в системном рассмотрении афоризма как когнитивно-маркированной единицы, реализующей выдвигание через совмещение структурной завершённости, смысловой компрессии и стилистической выразительности. Достоверность результатов обеспечивается опорой на признанные теоретические источники и репрезентативный корпус литературных примеров. Практическая значимость работы заключается в возможности использования результатов в курсах стилистики, когнитивной лингвистики и анализа художественного текста, а также при интерпретации и переводе афористических высказываний.

Ключевые слова: афоризм, выдвигание, когнитивная стилистика, языковая девиация, параллелизм, художественный текст, концепт, стилистическая конвергенция.

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Contemporary cognitive linguistics and cognitive stylistics are increasingly addressing the problem of text organization as a means of expressing meaning. One of the main mechanisms of semantic actualization in the text is the phenomenon of foregrounding – a cognitive-stylistic device aimed at emphasizing certain elements in order to attract attention and increase their conceptual importance. This article is devoted to the study of literary aphorisms as one of the most expressive and concentrated means of foregrounding. An aphorism is a short, pithy statement containing a generalized thought or observation, often of a paradoxical, ironic, or philosophical nature (Gross 2006). These features make the aphorism a particularly important object of analysis in the cognitive-stylistic context. The relevance of the study is determined by the growing interest in the interaction of cognitive and stylistic mechanisms in literary texts, as well as the need for a systematic description of the aphorism as a multifunctional linguistic phenomenon. Although some aspects of the aphorism have already been considered in works on stylistics, cognitive linguistics and text theory, the problem

of aphorism as a means of foregrounding has not yet been comprehensively analyzed. This article identifies and describes the functional characteristics of literary aphorisms as a means of foregrounding, determines their role in the cognitive organization of the text, as well as analyzes the mechanisms that ensure their stylistic and conceptual significance. To achieve this goal, the following tasks are being addressed: defining the concept of foregrounding and means of foregrounding proposed by different researchers; description of the main stylistic and cognitive aspects of aphorism; classification of aphorisms according to the means of foregrounding; The scientific novelty of the article lies in the systematic approach to the analysis of the aphorism as a cognitively marked unit that creates foregrounding through the combination of stylistic devices, semantic deviations and communicative expressiveness.

The notion of foregrounding remains a central topic in cognitive linguistics and stylistics (Ashurova 2025). It is a way of organizing text in which certain elements are more prominent due to their stylistic expressiveness, conceptual importance and aesthetic density (Арнольд 1981).

From a cognitive perspective, foregrounding is understood as a conceptual category related to the redistribution of attention and the mechanisms of perception. As defined in *A Brief Dictionary of Cognitive Terms*, processes of meaning construction are inseparable from such mechanisms of attention, focus and information selection. L.G. Luzina highlights that foregrounding is based on surprise, unexpectedness and a change in the center of perception. Modern cognitive scientists often interpret the foreground through the figure-ground model, where the figure represents the most salient and conceptually significant element of the text (Кубрякова и др. 1996).

The problem of foregrounding was studied in detail by scientists of the Prague school of linguistics such as J. Mukařovský, B. Havranek and Russian Formal School including V. Shklovsky, R. Jakobson, etc. Mukařovský used the term “actualization” to describe the notion of foregrounding and associated it with a deliberate deviation from the norms of the language based on aesthetic goals. The scientist claims that “the function of poetic language consists in the maximum of foregrounding of the act of perception” (Mukařovský 1964: 19). which is achieved by “the violation of the norm of the standard language” (Leech, Short 2007). In this case, foregrounding is closely related to the process of de-automatization. B. Havranek, developing the ideas of Prague School, considered actualization to be a special form of language use that violates the usual presentation of the statement and attracts the reader’s attention. In this sense, actualization is closely related to automation of perception.

Within the framework of the Russian formalist school, the notion of foregrounding corresponds to the concept of “defamiliarization” (*otstranenie*) proposed by V. Shklovsky. According to his approach, the literary text should make the perception of the thing difficult and restore the immediacy of experience. The author argues that “the purpose of art is to impart the sensation of things as they are perceived and not as they are known”. It is verbalized through specific techniques which “make objects ‘unfamiliar’, make forms difficult, and increase the difficulty and length of perception” (Shklovsky 1965:12). The ideas of defamiliarization were further developed in the works of R. Jakobson, who connected the poetic function of the language with the specific orientation of the sentence to its form (Jakobson 1987).

In the traditional stylistics, the notion of foregrounding was actively studied by I.V. Arnold and V.A. Kukhareenko. I. V. Arnold, based on the tradition of the English language, defined foregrounding as a special organization that highlights its most significant elements, and enhances its expressiveness and aesthetic effect (Арнольд 2002). She emphasized the following mechanisms of foregrounding such as stylistic convergence, coupling and defeated expectancy. V.A. Kukhareenko further develops this approach and introduces additional mechanisms of foregrounding encompassing strong position, contrast, title, epigraph and expressive means (Кухаренко 2004). Researchers such as G. Leech, M. Short, J. Douthwaite and N.M. Djusupov identify other key mechanisms of foregrounding including linguistic deviation and parallelism. In the works of G. Leech and M. Short, foregrounding is interpreted primarily as a deviation from the language norm and is divided into two main types: quantitative and qualitative deviation. Quantitative deviation is related to the change in the expected repetition of the language forms, which is achieved through repetition, parallelism, anaphora, epiphora, alliteration, and other patterns. Qualitative deviation, on the other hand, involves various levels of deviation from the language system itself, including phonetic, lexical, grammatical and semantic deviations. Such deviations can take the form of paradox, oxymoron, neologisms, archaisms, and deliberate grammatical irregularities, all of which serve to foreground meaning by disrupting traditional linguistic expectations (Leech, Short 2007). M. Short also emphasized the significance of parallelism in the structure of a literary text. In his opinion, the repetition of language structures increases the semantic density of the sentence and encourages the reader to look for additional logical connections between repeated parts (Short 1996). However, the most complete analysis of this phenomenon from a cognitive-stylistic point of view is available in the works of N.M. Djusupov. In his studies, N.M. Djusupov highlights the relationship between linguistic deviation and parallelism, noting that both mechanisms serve to emphasize form and meaning, although they achieve this by different means (Джусупов 2024). At the same time, D.U. Ashurova in her monograph (2025), proposes fragments of the text containing “author’s meditation” as another means of foregrounding. Their characteristic features include autocemanticity, conceptuality, stylistic markedness and deviations from narrative plot line that create the effect of foregrounding. Moreover, she argues that positions of foregrounding in a literary text are occupied by key words, symbols, literary conceptual metaphors, dominant concepts verbalized in the text and even individual stylistic devices that determine the conceptual meaning of the entire literary work (Ashurova 2025:37).

Considering all the theoretical approaches discussed above, we can claim that a literary aphorism can be interpreted as one of the most concise and effective means of foregrounding. Its special feature is that the aphorism summarizes a large amount of literary, philosophical and cultural information in a very compressed form. This semantic density ensures that the aphorism is evident in the text structure and serves as a means of foregrounding. Aphoristic statements not only express generalized thoughts, but also shape the trajectory of text interpretation, organize the reader’s attention and structure the process of meaning formation. Literary aphorisms also integrate a number of stylistic devices such as repetition, deviation, allusion, etc., which assist in highlighting key elements within the text. From the cognitive-stylistic point of view, the aphorism is characterized by completeness, rhythmic organization, symmetry and parallelism often created on the basis of paradox,

antithesis, irony, convergence of stylistic devices and semantic deviation. It often represents a concise framework for understanding the world, human nature, social relations, morality, love, power, art or truth. In this sense, a literary aphorism is not just a stylistic tool, but a cognitive unit encoding the author's individual world picture. Below we will consider a number of literary aphorisms from the works of O. Wilde, J. Orwell and W. Blake, which function not only as a means of foregrounding but at the same time carrier of other means of foregrounding such as deviation, parallelism, repetition, convergence of stylistic devices etc. within their structure. It should be noted that these elements can serve as evidence for our claim that literary aphorisms can be considered as one of the mechanisms of foregrounding in literary text.

In the following example, we can observe a vivid example of the convergence of stylistic devices in a literary aphorism:

Surely love is wonderful thing. It is more precious than emeralds, and dearer than fine opals. Pearls and pomegranates cannot buy it, nor is it set forth in the marketplace. It may not be purchased of the merchants, nor can it be weighed out in the balance for gold" (Wilde 2000).

In this passage, the aphorism is created through stylistic convergence, that is, the simultaneous interaction of stylistic devices such as metaphor ("*love is wonderful thing*"), epithet (*wonderful thing*) parallel construction, personification and rhythmically organized syntax. The stylistic and conceptual significance of this aphorism is conditioned not only by the usage of stylistic devices but also by the gradual emotional tension created by the convergence of stylistic devices. In this example, the convergence of stylistic devices also creates a high level of expressiveness and semantic density, which allows the statement to act as an important element of the text.

Another vivid example which activates foregrounding is George Orwell's aphorism from "1984":

"War is Peace. Freedom is Slavery. Ignorance is Strength" (Orwell 2003:4).

This aphorism plays a crucial role for the realization of foregrounding in a literary text, since it is based on linguistic mechanisms of semantic deviation and parallelisms created by coupling incompatible logically inconsistent notions. (*war and peace, freedom and slavery*) Semantic deviation as known is a deliberate violation of semantic rules to create new meaning. In this example, meaning emerges from the paradoxical combination of two opposite notions such as "*war is piece*", "*freedom is slavery*", which forces the reader to reinterpret the conventional conceptual oppositions.

Parallelism, which is based on the regular usage of syntactical constructions, is also considered as one of the means of foregrounding. It is aimed at attracting the reader's attention, to highlight the stylistic and conceptual significance of the repeated structures and to create the effect of gradual emotional tension. In this example, the usage of semantic deviations within parallel constructions strengthens both the stylistic and conceptual significance of the literary aphorism. Most important here is a socio-cultural function of aphorism which intends to sarcastically criticize and condemn the totalitarian regime of the society.

A further well-known aphorism from "*The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*" by William Blake can also be a good example to represent foregrounding created by repetition:

“Attraction and Repulsion, Reason and Energy, Love and Hate, are necessary to Human existence” (Blake 2008:38).

This aphorism is based on a chain of oppositional pairs which represents the main features of human existence. The antithesis *“Attraction and Repulsion”, “Reason and Energy”, “Love and Hate”* creates the contrast based on the binary oppositions which is considered one of the means of foregrounding. Binary opposition is defined as a universal cognitive mechanism and principle of categorization, through which reality is structured and understood in terms of oppositional conceptual pairs that function as fundamental units of meaning construction. It should be noted that the principle of binary categorization and structuring of the world is represented both at the level of consciousness and at the level of language (phonological, lexical and syntactic). As a result, binary oppositions exert a significant influence on the formation of both conceptual and linguistic worldview of the individual (Galieva 2014). In this example, the binary oppositions assist in representing the author’s conceptual world picture. According to Blake’s worldview, oppositions are not mutually separate or inconsistent, but their existence is mutually necessary. Therefore, the aphorism does not simply recognize the existence of contradictions, but it posits the principle of contrast as a universal law of existence. The repeated combination of *“and”* creates an accumulative effect, and the structure gives the statement rhythmic completeness.

The analysis demonstrates that the literary aphorism should indeed be regarded as an independent and productive means of foregrounding in a literary text. Its salience is determined by a combination of interrelated characteristics: structural completeness, semantic concentration, stylistic markedness, cognitive density and pragmatic orientation. Unlike a detailed description or narration, literary aphorisms compress the idea into a very compact form and maintain a high level of content density. Through such compression, the aphorism functions as a strong textual position and continues to function beyond its original literary context.

The analysis of literary aphorisms also illustrated that the expressiveness of aphorisms is based on convergence of stylistic devices. The most common among them are parallelism, antithesis, repetition, paradox, irony, metaphor and gradation. It is the combination of these stylistic devices that ensures the multi-layeredness of the aphoristic sentence. From a cognitive point of view, aphorisms function as a means of forming and activating concepts. It should be noted that most of the examples discussed are based on the violation of logical, moral or cultural expectations. The reader is faced with an unexpected structure that requires a pause, revision and intellectual effort. It is where the most important cognitive-stylistic effect of foregrounding resides. The pragmatic function of aphorisms is that they affect the reader not only intellectually, but also emotionally. Some aphorisms evoke admiration, others irony and still others philosophical puzzlement or even shock. Through this, aphorisms become an effective means of de-automizing perception. Within the framework of cognitive stylistics, an aphorism should be interpreted as a text unit of increased semiotic density that emphasizes information and regulates the reader's perception.

In conclusion, as a result of our research, the following conclusion can be made:

– The authors’ aphorisms in the literary text due to their linguistic features, such as short and laconic forms and semantic density, can be regarded as an essential means of foregrounding and in

addition, these aphorisms encompass other means of foregrounding such as deviation, parallelism, repetition, stylistic convergence created by antithesis, paradox, irony, etc. in their content

– The authors' aphorisms as a means of foregrounding convey conceptually significant information and assist in representing the author's individual world picture

The findings of this study enable us to formulate a number of theoretical and practical recommendations:

– it would be beneficial to more actively include the analysis of aphoristic sentences in the courses of stylistics, text interpretation, cognitive linguistics. A literary aphorism is a convenient material for demonstrating mechanisms of foregrounding, as it reflects complex processes of foregrounding in a compact form.

– further research may be aimed at comparative analysis of aphorisms from different literary traditions and languages, encompassing English and Uzbek aphoristic traditions.

– the translation of literary aphorisms deserves special attention, because the interlanguage transfer of these texts requires preserving not only their denotative content but also the effect of cognitive actualization.

– it would be effective to expand the field of research by including in the analysis not only classical literary texts, but also modern discursive practices in which aphoristic expression is active: journalism, mass media, digital communication, political and advertising discourse.

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