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THE NOTION OF COMPARISON IN “HARRY POTTER”

The present paper touches upon stylistic peculiarities of “Harry Potter” by J.K. Rowling. In order to provide completeness of the language material observed, an attempt is made to analyze the nuances in the differences between comparisons and similes in daily speech and fairy tales. The paper also analyzes pragmasemantic peculiarities of comparisons and simile used by the author to make the desired impact on the reader.

Key words: J.K. Rowling, “Harry Potter”, simile, comparison, cliché, tale, narrative

The main purpose of the paper is to analyze the concept of comparison in “Harry Potter” by J. K. Rowling with the help of the examples taken from “Harry Potter and Deathly Hallows”, “Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince”, “Harry Potter and Sorcerer’s Stone”, and “Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets”. Prior to the study of the subject matter of the present paper it is necessary to speak about the essence of a tale, its main types and, indispensably, certain peculiarities.

According to Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary, tale is defined as a story created using the imagination, especially one that is full of action and adventure /OALD, 7th edition, 2006/. Other definitions, more or less the same, may include or exclude peculiarities, depicting the term. For example, according to the Princeton Online Dictionary, a tale is a simple narrative /wordnetweb.princeton.edu/. A tale is a more general term than a short story, since the latter is applied to a narrative that follows a fairly technical pattern, and the former denotes any short narrative. Another definition worth being called many-sided and highly explicit is the following: a tale is a short narrative, usually lacking detail, with unrealistic and sometimes fantastic characters and events / www.iolani.org/. Usually tales are less concerned with revealing theme and character than short stories.

Literary tales freely share plots, motifs and elements both with oral fairy tales and with foreign tales. Brothers Grimm worked on preserving the oral touch of the registered tales but when transmitting them in written form, were compelled to make changes to fit the demands of both the written form and of the sales. Many contemporary authors make use of fairy tale motifs or even whole plots to tackle certain questions, be it the human condition or the specific problems of the time. One explanation is that the frame a fairy tale provides a suitable set for any kind of problem discussion, and solutions, whether suggested or hinted by authors, may prove helpful even if presented in ranks of magic. That is why a growing number of authors choose to recreate the fantastic into the realm of contemporary tale. Yet the

distinction between a fairy tale and fantasy script never fades. One simple technique that keeps the distinction is novelistic narration. On the other hand, it is quite curious to acknowledge that a modern day author's perspective, creative and classic as it may be, would most likely produce any ancient fairy tale in a manner that is by all means with a modern touch. In other words, the speech of the author must suit the ears of the contemporaries to be utmost comprehensible.

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What comes to the contrasting of the real world and the fantasy world, we find ourselves in conviction that it is just the most righteous move possible. As Rowling sees the parallel existence of the two worlds, expressed through the lips of one of her literary characters, "...it *is* happening in your head...but why on earth should that mean that it is not real?" /Rowling, 2008: 723/. The made-up parallel world is often compared to a stage where we expect practically any event to happen as if naturally, yet in the meantime we realize its fantastic quality. The parallel world does not change the matters at hand but it does influence the attitude of accepting the incredible and out-of-ordinary conventions and events. What does not fit in the existing reality is transferred into another world where the basic implication of all things is the conventional possibility of any suggested fantasy.

We shall come to see that in "Harry Potter" the reader witnesses gradual employment of simile and cliché with the growth and development of the characters. This technique is rather cleverly utilized by the author to make a smooth presentation of the development of passing time and inevitable maturation from book to book, i.e., from year to year of schooling.

The study of linguo-stylistic means in literature may lead us to surmise that there exist different approaches to the utilization of the latter. Although cultural history shows that due to greater communication and globalization, changes are registered in this field as well, it is not hard to notice that simile is still the chief means of stressed comparison in literature. We feel it necessary to mention here that the novel at hand possesses such clever structure and style that critical words seem artificial for such a balanced and thoughtful management of the concept of comparison throughout the seven novels of "Harry Potter".

Presently, let us dwell upon the central terms – comparison and simile, as well as upon their manifestations.

"Encyclopedic Dictionary of the Young Philologist" defines comparison as a figure of speech employed to bring to the conceptual understanding of one thing or phenomenon through another on the basis of contrasting of a certain feature. Two elements are essential for comparison, specifically, the object that is compared and another object that it is being compared to. Here we recognize another component

which is closely linked to both – the base of comparison, usually a feature or a characteristic. Since comparisons and similes perform the same function in poetry and prose as metaphors, we do need to mention that in case of metaphor only the second component is present and understanding is done through assimilation.

In one of the “Harry Potter” sequels, we come across to such a common comparison as:

“You look very like your father” (Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince, p. 69).

Harry and his father naturally belong to the same class of humans which means that the comparison is between homogeneous notions. Hence, we have an ordinary comparison in the above mentioned example.

Apart from hints of the homogeneous objects being compared a comparison is recognized mainly by words *as...as...* or *like*.

The concept of comparison is implemented in literature not only for the sake of emotive effect but also for the reader to get a balanced emotional contentment while untangling the multisided interrelations of objects and phenomena that may seem absolutely incoherent. Moreover, there can be no absolute similarity or difference in this case, especially if logic has little to do with such comparison. On the contrary, be it similarity or difference, the implication is subsequent, i.e. we consider the degrees of similarity or dissimilarity. However, numerous ready comparisons (eyes – stars, face – sun) might be the authors’ unexpected and unique comparisons, creating proposals of “high” or “low” according to the compared object or idea. From this standpoint, it is clear that every successful work of literature is a masterfully and artfully woven individual canvas of comparisons which neither cram into one another nor overshadow the purposeful expressiveness of the others.

It is a fact that the whole verbal art is a chain of comparisons, especially if it refers to tales. From a psychological point of view, the comprehension of the new is most easily carried out by means of comparison with something familiar. Children, in particular, are more sensitive to this subject as their information span is not always adequate to understand phenomena outside of their daily reality. When it comes to tales, which are almost the immediate shapers of a child’s imagination and recognition of the world, comparisons prove handy. It is therefore natural to expect that tales are endowed with a rich variety of comparisons, and ordinary comparisons, in particular. The reason is obvious; ordinary comparison is simpler both in form and in content; hence it is easily digestible by children.

Being a skilled psychologist at heart, Rowling has thoroughly considered this matter in the creation of “Harry Potter”. The analysis of the seven successive books of “Harry Potter” has lead us to understand that Rowling indeed has taken into account the importance of the psychology touched in her novels. For instance, we find the distribution of comparisons, similes and clichés smartly balanced and allocated, due to the age and maturation of her characters. Additionally, the theme

and the profoundness of the used comparisons are accordingly suited as to which of the heroes thinks or utters them. We can also distinguish the author's own comparisons as the narrator of the novel.

Overall, the management of the distribution of ordinary comparisons, similes and clichés in children's literature is a serious task to deal with. As the general review of "Harry Potter" suggests, the author has really succeeded in promoting the successful mission of the tale of "Harry Potter".

"He was almost twice as tall as a normal man and at least five times as wide" (Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone, p. 14).

Simple though these ordinary comparisons may seem to the average reader, they are consistent with the track of thoughts of an eleven-year-old. It is also easy for a young child to imagine a person who is seen as twice as tall as a normal man. So here we are able to evaluate the author's consideration of how her hero's mind works. *"Dudley looked a lot like Uncle Vernon"* (Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone, p. 21).

The aforementioned example is a comparison any child would form regarding the similar appearances between the two people. However, the idea subscribed implores the reader or the child who listens to the text to make a detour to one of their appearances (naturally described earlier) and link what is similar.

Although an ordinary comparison may be considered boring and not as effective as simile or cliché, it, too, can serve as a tool for bringing humour into the tale. The childish assimilation of Dudley to a gorilla is logical but even more interesting and humorous is the notion of difference ten-year-old Harry considers, merely the colour of hair.

As mentioned previously, a large number of unfamiliar notions may be presented with the help of ordinary comparison. For example, in "Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone" the author makes a reference to what Muggle is, a term unfamiliar to the reader, through a dialogue woven of ordinary comparisons. Here is the dialogue:

"I'd like ter see a great Muggle like you stop him", he said.

"A what?" said Harry, interested.

"A Muggle," said Hagrid, "it's what we call nonmagic folk like them"... (Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone, p. 52)

There are also a number of creative similes in the book. Again, we should bear in mind that they are accorded with the probable accessibility for children.

"... and his feet in their leather boots were like baby dolphins" (Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone, p. 14).

It is true that not every child would make such a connection to large feet and baby dolphins, but with this the author underlines the specialty how the main hero's mind and imagination work. The example shows that, when attentive, we can catch such expressions from the children around us and be pleasantly surprised at their creative thinking.

One more example will show how resourceful and vivid a simple simile can be and how it can endow an expression with emphasis and interest.

“Hermione, who had all her fingers crossed in her lap, was squinting fixedly at Harry, who was circling the game like a hawk, looking for the Snitch” (Harry Potter and the Sorcerer’s Stone, p. 223).

As for clichés, it is a general tendency to consider their extensive use as a sign of limited creativity and poor imagination. Most likely the author did not need to refer to clichés often but used them from time to time when they seemed right to the point.

“It was sitting as still as a statue, its eyes fixed unblinkingly on the far corner of the Privet Drive” (Harry Potter and the Sorcerer’s Stone, p. 8).

“His whole body rigid, he swayed where he stood and then fell flat on his face, as stiff as a board” (Harry Potter and the Sorcerer’s Stone, p. 273).

Although we didn’t illustrate all the examples of ordinary comparisons and similes, we see that in Book One there are more ordinary comparisons than similes within 60 pages. Currently we shall pass on to the consideration of the examples in Book Two, “Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets”.

“Malfoy made Dudley Dursley look like a kind, thoughtful and sensitive boy” (Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets, p. 29).

In the illustrated example two boys are compared on the basis of character, where one of them is presented as if he possessed the inscribed features, the reader feels sarcasm in it because it obviously implies “least worst of the two”.

“Yeah, I’ve seen those things they think are gnomes,” said Ron bent double with his head in a peony bush, “like fat little Santa Clauses with fishing rods...” (Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets, p. 36).

Comparing a gnome with Santa Clause might seem like a simile at first sight. But if we consider the magical character of the book and view the two creatures from wizard’s point of view, it becomes clear that the expression contains the overtones of ordinary comparison. All in all, both the gnome and Santa Clause belong to the class of the same unique creatures even for a wizard.

“Mrs. Weasley had appeared, holding a long poker like a sword” (Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets, p. 38).

There is no need to mention that a poker and a sword are metallic, and the comparison is made on the stanza of holding the poker as one would hold a sword. Yet the impact it imprints on the mind is of huge value: a furious woman with a sword in her hand. The comparison may truly be named influential.

We shall round up listing the ordinary comparisons in Book Two with the following example of an ordinary comparison. The expression is made by a flying wizard who has lost memory of who he is:

“Amazing! Amazing! This is just like magic” (Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets, p. 325).

With a few examples of similes we observe how the heroes have grown up.

“It was small and leathery looking, with a large, knobby, bald head exactly like a potato” (Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets, p. 37).

“His brain felt like a wrung sponge” (Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets, p. 95).

“London was soon far behind them, replaced by neat green fields that gave way in turn to wide, purplish moors, a great city alive with cars like multicolored ants, villages with tiny toy churches” (Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets, p. 72).

As can be seen from the aforementioned examples, ordinary comparisons outnumber similes in the book. Those similes which catch our attention are still lighter in content, mainly metonymic and referring to surface features (*bald head exactly like a potato, cars like multicolored ants*). A change is noticeable in the example where the spiritual state of a hero is compared to the state of a wrung sponge.

The following example of a cliché will reinforce the conclusion we have put forward based on the examples from Book Two.

“...Mrs. Weasley swelled like a bullfrog” (Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets, p. 39).

Compared to “Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince”, “Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows” is richly endowed with comparative language. More than a hundred similes can be counted in the last book but they all come to be irreplaceable for the instances they are employed for. As there is more action and far more new elements of the magical world described through the jumble of crisscrossed events in Book Six and Book Seven, even there is also undeniable necessity to illustrate them through other notions. The same goes with similes connected with thoughts and feelings. We would like to highlight all the above mentioned examples.

““We thought you knew what you were doing!” shouted Ron, standing up; and his words pierced Harry like scalding knives” (Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows, p. 252).

“To be polite, he took a sip from his cup too and almost gagged: the stuff was quite disgusting, as though someone had liquidized bogey-flavoured Every-Flavour Beans” (Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows, p. 329).

“... as he forced himself through the slit of a window like a snake and landed, lightly as vapour, inside the cell-like room-” (Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows, p. 368).

“He looked ghostly as he gulped” (Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows, p. 402).

“...Harry dug in his knees, clutching as tightly as he could to the jagged scales [of the dragon] as the wings opened, knocking the shrieking goblins aside like skittles, and it soared into the air” (Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows, p. 437).

“*“I know mate”, said Ron, who looked as though he had recently been hit on the back of the head with a Bludger, so it’s now or never, isn’t it?*” (Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows, p. 503).

“*Behind his head, still swirling and soiling the great snake Nagini flooded in her glittering charmed cage, like a monstrous halo*” (Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows, p. 563).

Let us now explore comparisons concerning **weather and darkness**. Here we must mention that the fact of Rowling being a British writer has undoubtedly had a say.

“*By the time they reached open ground, darkness was settling like a spell around them*” (Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban, p. 333).

“*By dusk, the still summer air itself seemed to be quivering with anticipation, and as darkness spread like a curtain over the thousands of waiting wizards, the last vestiges of pretence disappeared...*” (Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire, p. 92).

In the first example referring to **darkness**, the author has chosen an attention-grabbing notion to compare the settling of the darkness with *spell*. Not only does the expression make the reader stop for a moment in order to reread it for verification of what was read but he/she also turns to intense fantasizing to fully grasp the correlation. With this simile, as we see, the mere description of an ordinary phenomenon as falling of darkness acquires a particular sensitive connotation of mystery and mixed feelings as to what may be behind such a vividly pictured phenomenon.

The second simile is somewhat familiar as it is often used in many cultures. It is not the author’s individual creation of a simile but rather a clever use of the existing one to portray the progress of an evening. It is also easier to make out the relationship of an ending day with the falling curtain over the stage as it is again connected with extinguishing of theatrical lights and an end of a play.

“*Like rain on a cold window, these thoughts pattered against the hard surface of the incontrovertible truth, which was that he must die*” (Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows, p. 556).

Truly, another astonishing produce of a skillful pen, this simile speaks for itself. It appears rather close to a person who has experienced (and surely there is a large number of them) a concerning persisting thought.

Another example is presented below.

“*...the fiery monsters were circling them, drawing closer and closer, claws and horns and tails lashed, and the heat was solid as a wall around them*” (Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows, p. 508).

The examples that contain similes connected with weather or darkness are not very large in quantity but they produce vibrant images to make the reading enjoyable and informative. They also enrich one’s imagination with the new coinages the author has come up with.

Since the parallel world is an inseparable particle of a literary tale, and tale in general, it is natural to expect comparisons with elements of the *imaginary* world. In “Harry Potter” it is the magical world around which most of the plot is woven. Let us mention here that comparisons containing notions of magic prevail in the later books, in “Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix”, “Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince” and “Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows”, in particular. Let’s consider which elements of the *magical* world have managed to mingle with comparisons.

“It’s like going out with the giant squid” (Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince, p. 450).

It is not difficult to find a squid’s picture in a book of Biology or in an Encyclopedia but the reader should consider the fact that knowing them so well as to easily relate a situation with a date with a giant squid is not as ordinary in real life. The employment of the notion of the squid does indicate that the statements of heroes in the magical world are built in consistency with the elements of that world.

“Yes, even after they’d spent all day in discussion- both such brilliant young boys, they got on like cauldron on fire- I’d sometimes hear an owl tapping at Gallert’s bedroom window, delivering a letter from Albus!” (Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows, p. 291).

The word *cauldron* in the sample simile undoubtedly speaks for brewing and making potions which is another component of an average wizard’s daily life. Hence, by comparing two best friends with a *cauldron on fire* the author makes her point clear that they are inseparable and perfectly completing each other.

To conclude, Rowling’s “Harry Potter” provides an enormous chance to develop analysis on the topic of prevailing comparisons. The consequent outcome shows that the younger the target reader, the larger is the use of ordinary comparisons. Moreover, the structure of comparisons demonstrates certain development of mind. Finally, the gradual use of metonymic and metaphoric similes, as well as clichés accordingly, reveals the maturation of both book characters and children, in general.

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Հ. ԹԱՄԱԶՅԱՆ – Համեմատության հասկացությունը «Հարրի Փոթեր» վեպում. – Սույն հոդվածը նվիրված է Ջ. Ք. Ռոուլինգի «Հարրի Փոթեր» վեպի մի շարք ոճական առանձնահատկությունների քննությանը: Փորձ է արվել վերլուծելու հեքիաթների և առօրյա խոսքի մեջ գործածվող համեմատությունների և գեղարվեստական համեմատությունների տարբերությունները: Հոդվածը նաև քննում է «Հարրի Փոթեր» վեպում գործածվող գեղարվեստական համեմատությունների իմաստային և գործարանական առանձնահատկությունները:

Բանալի բաներ. Ջ.Ք. Ռոուլինգ, «Հարրի Փոթեր», համեմատություն, գեղարվեստական համեմատություն, կաղապարաբառ, հեքիաթ, պատմվածք

Э. ТАМАЗЯН – Понятие сравнения в романе «Гарри Поттер». – В статье рассматриваются стилистические особенности серии романов Дж. К. Роулинг «Гарри Поттер». В частности, рассматриваются основные различия между обычными сравнениями и авторскими сравнениями в сказках и в повседневной речи. Также анализируются прагмасемантические особенности стилистического приема сравнения как средства достижения желаемого эффекта.

Ключевые слова: Дж.К. Роулинг, «Гарри Поттер», сравнение, авторское сравнение, клише, рассказ, повествование

Ներկայացվել է՝ 20.03.2019
Երաշխավորվել է ԵՊՀ Անգլերենի թիվ 1 ամբիոնի կողմից
Ընդունվել է տպագրության՝ 25.04.2019