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Text from a functional communicative perspective: a linguistic analysis of Chekhov’s humoresque “My ‘her’”

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Abstract: The article presents a theoretical framework for linguistic analysis of a text – Functional Communicative Grammar (FCG). Based on the assumption that any text is generated by the communicative intentions of the speaker, this approach focuses on the speaker’s time and space perspective in relation to the depicted situation, the plurality of subjects involved and the different statuses of these subjects within an utterance. The methodology allows the analyst to reveal the author’s tactics and strategy in the creation of a text and to point out the linguistic tools that help them achieve the desired effect on the reader. To demonstrate the framework’s potential, I perform a linguistic analysis of a short humoresque by Chekhov, using specific categories developed within FCG. Analyzing the semantics of predicative and non-predicative units, I generalize over the organization of the textual time, subject perspective and registers understood as communicative types of speech, and demonstrate how Chekhov creates the effect of deceived expectation at the linguistic level.

Keywords: literary text, Functional Communicative Grammar, time and space organization, subject perspective, communicative register, Russian language

1 Introduction

Since the mid-twentieth century the text has been considered one of the key concepts in the humanities. Having been merely the object of philological and rhetorical studies for centuries, the text was realized to be “the primary given [...] of all thought in the human sciences and philosophy in general,” “the unmediated reality (reality of thought and experience), the only one from which these disciplines and this thought can emerge” (Bakhtin 1986 [1950–1961]: 103). This broad concept of “text” defines it as any coherent complex of signs relevant for a

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particular culture (Bakhtin 1986 [1950–1961]: 103), any complete message in any possible language, whether a natural language, or another semiotic structure specific to cultural communities. An artistic verbal text is argued to present the highest manifestation of a culture, “a multilingual device with complex and non-trivial relations between subtexts (structural aspects coming out on the background of any of the languages)” (Lotman 1992: 27).

At the same time as the notion of text was absolutized in semiotics, it was stressed in linguistics that people communicate by means of texts, not by means of words or isolated sentences (Halliday 1978; Hartmann 1965: § 19; Hjelmslev 1953: 71; Weinrich 1966: 15). Consequently, the idea of the sentence as the ultimate level of linguistic analysis (Benveniste 1962: 491–498) gave way to the recognition of the text as “the basic linguistic unit manifesting itself, as discourse in verbal utterances” (Van Dijk 1972: 3), “language in use” (Halliday 1974: 48), and “the ultimate reality of the language” (Zolotova et al. 2004 [1998]: 6).

This shift in the status of the text led to a whole range of new questions. First of all, if the text constitutes a distinct and primary level of linguistic analysis, how does it relate to the language system and what should be considered the basic unit of the text? Galperin (1981: 3), for instance, proposed that the text is a level of speech (Saussurian *parole*), not a level of language (*langue*). Harweg (1968: 152), by contrast, distinguished emic texts (defined by text-immanent criteria) from etic texts (defined by extralinguistic criteria not based on language structure). The second essential question is how to identify the elements that define a text and distinguish it from a random sequence of sentences, which has received answers such as e.g. Beaugrande and Dressler’s (1981) seven standards of textuality: cohesion, coherence, intentionality, acceptability, informativity, situationality, intertextuality; and Halliday and Hasan’s (1976) five types of cohesive devices in English: reference, substitution, ellipsis, conjunction and lexical cohesion. Further issues addressed include: typologies of texts (Werlich 1976; Kinneavy 1980; Biber 1989; Heinemann 2000; Virtanen 2010); the role of text in human communication, its relation to subjects of speech, and the pragmatics of the text (Schmidt 1973); types of information that texts can convey (Galperin 1981); text progression and stagnation (Daneš 1970; Harweg 1972); structure of the text, macrotext, intertext, hypertext, etc.

The specific challenge linguistics faces is to create a system of text-specific categories and to develop a comprehensive methodology of text analysis. This study focuses on a model of text grammar which has received little attention in the West, i.e. Functional Communicative Grammar (henceforth FCG). This model was developed to analyze a text, starting from the inner structure of sentence models via their communicative and register characteristics to the text tactics

and strategy. I will demonstrate the explanatory potential of this theory by analyzing a short artistic text, Chekhov's humoresque "My 'her'."

The structure of the article is as follows. Section 2 discusses the main principles and categories of FCG applied in the analysis presented in Section 4. Section 3 presents the analyzed text with a translation into English. Section 5 offers concluding remarks.

2 The principles of Functional Communicative Grammar (FCG)

Functional Communicative Grammar, developed on the basis of Russian by G. A. Zolotova, N. K. Onipenko and M. Y. Sidorova (see e.g. Zolotova et al. 2004 [1998]; Zolotova 1973; Zolotova 1982; Onipenko 1994; Onipenko 2001; Onipenko 2010; Onipenko 2012; Sidorova 2000; Sidorova 2011a; Sidorova 2015), considers a text as "the result of semantic and communicative intentions" of the speaker. Extracting linguistic information from texts, FCG identifies regularities in the expression of meanings in different types of texts, as well as patterns of text structure and text functioning.

For a better understanding of FCG's premises, I will clarify its two key terms. The first term, *functional*, indicates that FCG does not only seek to comprehensively describe but also to explain language. As is well known, functionally oriented approaches set out to describe and interpret fundamental properties of language and of linguistic forms through their functions. As opposed to formal approaches, they consider grammar not as a completely autonomous system but as a system motivated by semantic and communicative factors.¹ Heath formulates the aims of functional linguistics as carefully analyzing "the function(s) of formal units, in the context of their functional interaction with other units" (Heath 1978: 88), and then regrouping them "into functional components which frequently do not coincide with the familiar formal components" (Heath 1978: 88). For instance, Russian *стол* 'table' and *вор* 'thief' morphologically belong to the same inclination type. Thus, formally, only their individual lexical meaning makes a difference. However, their functions in actual usage are different: nouns with personal meaning favor the positions of an agent, a subject of an action, or a subject of a quality or state, while names of objects are more

¹ The degree to which the grammar is seen as autonomous from language functions and discourse varies across functional schools. For a typology of functionally oriented approaches, see Van Valin (1990: 170–171).

common in the position of objects of human activity, or with predicates of quality, existence, location and causation (Zolotova et al. 2004: 31). FCG endeavors to integrate structure, semantics and function into one approach (Onipenko 2001: 9).² According to FCG, understanding the function of a linguistic unit requires first defining a system of coordinates, since the use of language resources is a matter of choice from a number of synonymous units with common functional, semantic and structural properties,³ in compliance with the communicative intentions of the speaker (Zolotova et al. 2004: 37). The latter evoke the second component, *communicative*: language structure is considered the means of realization in texts of human communicative needs.

In accordance with the idea of the speaker as an inalienable and crucial component of any text, one of FCG's central "tools" is the description of the speaker's position in the selection of linguistic means and the organization of the text. It is the position of the speaker that is argued to condition differences across communicative types of speech, texts, types of sentences and functional characteristics of the linguistic means applied: "The ratio of time plans, points of view, ways of perception, attitudes, register tools, – all are determined by the speaker's intention, and form, deliberately or intuitively, the image of the author" (Zolotova 2001: 323).

The roots of this approach can be traced back to classical studies of the polyphony of texts (plurality of voices) and the *point of view* (spatiotemporal position) of the speaking subject by Bakhtin (1963, Bakhtin 1986 [1950–1961]: 103), of point of view in artistic texts by Uspensky (1973),⁴ and, especially, of "the image of the author" – a text category introduced by Vinogradov (1927; Vinogradov 1930; Vinogradov 1936; Vinogradov 1959; Vinogradov 1971) as the text's primary organizing principle. The "image of the author" is conceptualized as not just a subject of speech, but "a concentrated embodiment of the very essence of the artistic work, uniting the whole system of the character's speech

2 Halliday and Mathiessen formulate a similar view: "The perspective moves away from structure to consideration of grammar as system, enabling us to show the grammar as a meaning-making resource and to describe grammatical categories by reference to what they mean" (Halliday and Mathiessen 2013: 10).

3 The notion of choice is likewise central in Systemic Functional Grammar (e.g. Fontaine et al. 2013).

4 Studies on "point of view" are obviously not limited to the works mentioned above. Introduced in James (1884), "point of view" has become a key category of narratology and is discussed in e.g. Lintvelt (1981), correlates with a typology of visions by Pouillon (1946), and focalization in Genette (1972; Genette 1983), Rimmon-Kenan (1994), Bal (2009). A linguistic approach to point of view is presented, *inter alia*, by Langacker (2008: 73–85) in terms of "perspective," "viewing arrangement" and "the vantage point", see also studies of viewpoint in Dancygier and Sweetser (2012), Dancygier et al. (2016).

patterns as they relate to the narrator and storyteller(s) and through them being the ideological and stylistic centre, focus of the whole” (Vinogradov 1971: 118).⁵ The “image of the author” is considered the central problem of poetics and stylistics in Vinogradov’s works and those of a plethora of his followers.

I will briefly illustrate the concept of the position of the speaker with reference to the notion of *temporal space*. FCG holds that the temporal space of a text is more complicated than the formal morphological tense paradigm, with its monodirectional axis from past to future. Table 1 contains an excerpt from Pushkin’s “The Tale of the Fisherman and the Fish” discussed in Zolotova et al. (2004: 22).

Table 1: An excerpt from Pushkin’s “The Tale of the Fisherman and the Fish” (a) with a line-by-line translation into English (c) and indication of grammatical tense of the verbal predicates (b).

(a) Original text	(b) Grammatical tense form of verbs		(c) Translation into English
	original	English	
<i>В третий раз закинул он невод, —</i>	past	past	When he cast his net for the third time,
<i>Пришел невод с одною рыбкой.</i>	past	past	One fish was all that he landed,
<i>С непростю рыбкой, — золотю.</i>			No common fish, though, but a goldfish.
<i>Как взмолится золотая рыбка!</i>	future	past	Now the goldfish began to implore him,
<i>Голосом молвит человеческим [...]</i>	present	past	And it spoke like a real human being [...]
<i>Удивился старик, испугался.</i>	past	past	The old man was astonished and frightened ...

For the translation (c), I used the version by Zheleznova (Pushkin 1986) which translates the overall plot line by line. However, the English translation does not reflect the variety of tense forms used in the original (b). The text in fact describes a simple succession of events, which explains the use of preterites in the translation. By contrast, in the original one finds past, present and future forms. FCG proposes the following explanation: the use of tense forms as a structural feature of the text is motivated by changes in the observer’s point of view. Verbs in the

⁵ Cf. Bakhtin (1986 [1950–1961]: 116): “The author cannot be separated from the images and characters, since he enters into these images as an indispensable part of them (images are dual and sometimes are double-voiced). But the image of the author can be separated from the images of the characters. This image itself, however, is created by the author and is therefore also dual.”

past form belong to the author's narration while future and present forms convey the Old Man's emotions. Thus, the authors argue, "the choice of tense forms and their combination in a text is determined not by the actual speech time but by the conception of the speaker of the correlation between the time of an event and the time of its perception" (Zolotova et al. 2004: 22).

One of FCG's contributions is the identification of text constituents. Even though FCG views the syntaxeme (a syntactic form of a word) as an essential building block of Russian syntax, on the level of the utterance a system of "vertical" and "horizontal" coordinates is defined by two parameters: the nature of the reality the utterance refers to and the degree of abstraction from this reality (Zolotova et al. 2004: 29–36). The horizontal axis presents different communicative types of speech, *communicative registers*, understood as the basic, *constituent units of the text* (Zolotova 1984). The vertical axis defines semantic types of predicates and models of the sentence, from the dynamic zone of narration (models with the meaning of action and process) to the static zone of description (models with the meanings of quality, state, quantity and relation), thereby distinguishing between the narrative and descriptive register subtypes.

In FCG, communicative registers are defined as models of speech activity,⁶ (i) abstracted from a variety of predicative units or their combinations in homogeneous texts and (ii) realized in concrete utterances, texts or parts of texts, which addresses, in a way, the fundamental question of emic and etic structures. The three principal registers are: reproductive, informative and generative. In the *reproductive register*, the speaker reproduces the phenomena he observes sensorily in their temporal extent, occurring actually or in his imagination in the *chronotope*⁷ of the described events (modus frame: *I see, feel, hear that ...*), e.g. in (1).

⁶ The meaning of *register*, as a term, varies across linguistic theories. Sidorova (2011b) discusses the main similarities and differences between the use of the term in FCG, sociolinguistics, stylistics, narratology, systemic functional grammar, and the reference theory of J. P. Descles.

⁷ The term *chronotope* was introduced to humanities by Bakhtin (1981 [1937–1938]: 84) in the sense of "the intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships that are artistically expressed in literature." As a metaphor borrowed from Einstein's theory of relativity, it "expresses inseparability of space and time (time as the fourth dimension of space). In the literary artistic chronotope, spatial and temporal indicators are fused into one carefully thought-out, concrete whole. Time, as it were, thickens, takes on flesh, becomes artistically visible; likewise, space becomes charged and responsive to the movements of time, plot and history. This intersection of axes and fusion of indicators characterizes the artistic chronotope" (Bakhtin 1981 [1937–1938]: 84).

- (1) (Pushkin. “The Queen of Spades”, cited in Zolotova et al. 2004) Lizaveta Ivanovna, sitting at her embroidery by the window, inadvertently glanced into the street and saw a young engineer, standing motionless and directing his eyes at her window.

The informative register, on the other hand, offers information about events and qualities, unrestricted to the perceptor’s chronotope and presented as knowledge received as a result of repeated experiences or logical operations and conclusions (modus frame: *I know that ...*), e.g. (2a) which is an interpretation of the action observed in (2b).

- (2) (Chekhov. “Terror”, cited in Zolotova et al. 2004 [1998])
- a. Afterwards from the window I saw him by the stable, harnessing the horses with his own hands. His hands were trembling, he was in nervous haste and kept looking round at the house;
 - b. probably he was feeling terror.
 - c. Then he got into the gig...

The highest level of generalization is *the generative register* which presents the information as universal experience (typical of proverbs and aphorisms) and neutralizes the vertical opposition of dynamics and statics, narration and description.

For dialogic speech, two more types are relevant: *the volutive register*, used to impel the listener to an action, and *the reactive* one, used to express an evaluative reaction to a situation (Zolotova et al. 2004: 402–410).

As an analytical category, registers systematize ways of modeling reality in a text (level of generalization, time–space position of the speaker, sensory or mental way of cognition, dynamic or static character of the depicted reality). Register analysis in this sense is the functional classification of systemic language means (specific repertoires of linguistic resources distinctive of different registers). For instance, typical characteristics of the reproductive register are: the concrete semantics of the predicates and space–time localizers, spatial and temporal orientation vis-à-vis the observer, sensorily perceived objects and attributes, perceptual field limited by human capability and anthropomorphic angles of observation, progression of perceptual time and events, concrete reference of nouns, etc. (Sidorova 1997; Sidorova 2008).

The realization of communicative registers requires minimum one predicative unit, as in the informative register in (2b), which is surrounded by the reproductive registers (2a) and (2c). Predicative units of the same register form register blocks. The interaction between these blocks creates the structure of the

text and its space–time volume. For certain texts, typical ways of connecting the register blocks have been pointed out, such as the sequence “came – saw – interpreted – felt – did” for feature narrative prose (Sidorova 2011a: 173).

Another category relating grammatical objects to the speaker’s point of view is *the subject perspective of an utterance* (Zolotova 1973: 276–278; Onipenko 1994; Zolotova et al. 2004: 229–381). “Subject” refers here to any predicated component; its referent is described as being placed in the “subject sphere,” which is divided into five subject zones:

- S1 Subject of the base model (subject of an action or subject of a state):
The boy is reading / The boy feels cold
- S2 Causer: *The boy has moved the table*
- S3 Authorizer: *He knows, thinks that...*
- S4 Speaker
- S5 Listener (Addressee)

The classification is based on three parameters (Zolotova et al. 2004: 230):

1. Does the subject belong to the dictum zone (what is said, S1–S2) or to the modus zone (how it is said, S3–S5)?⁸
2. Is the semantic-syntactic status of the subject concrete (personal or animate, objective, spatial) or abstract (propositional)?
3. What referential characteristics does the subject have?

The subject perspective is the axis connecting these five subject zones, whose interaction organizes the utterance and explains its function in a text (Onipenko 2001).

FCG employs the syntactic categories of the subject perspective, communicative registers and taxis (as a technique of interpredicative relations in a text) to interpret the relation of the utterance to the speaker, its relation to reality and the relation of one utterance to another (Onipenko 2001). It thus wants to reveal the link between words, sentences and the text and between the text and the

8 The terms *dictum* and *modus* were introduced to linguistics by Charles Bally to distinguish two complementary parts of the sentence: the dictum, corresponding to “the process that constitutes representation,” and the modus, containing “the expression of modality, correlative to the operation of the thinking subject” (Bally 1932: §§ 28, 32). For Bally, the modus is “the soul of the sentence [...] and the dictum is the substance of what is said in an explicit statement” (Bally 1932: §§ 28, 32). Within FCG the division of the utterance into dictum and modus zones differentiates two types of predicates: the dictum predicates express objective information (what is said), the modus predicates, or predicates of the “modus frame,” give information about the interpretation of the dictum part (Zolotova et al. 2004: 75).

grammatical system. In order to combine systemic and text studies, FCG analyzes linguistic phenomena and texts as a unity of form, content and function. The three key questions addressed are:

1. What about? – for the semantic models of syntactic units
2. How? – for means of expression and structures
3. What for? – for the functional purpose of syntactic units

The analysis in Section 4 will illustrate the application of the categories of FCG to a specific literary text.

3 Text for analysis

МОЯ «ОНА»⁹

Она, как авторитетно утверждают мои родители и начальники, родилась раньше меня. Правы они или нет, но я знаю только, что я не помню ни одного дня в моей жизни, когда бы я не принадлежал ей и не чувствовал над собой её власти. Она не покидает меня день и ночь; я тоже не выказываю поползновения удрать от неё,— связь, стало быть, крепкая, прочная... Но не завидуйте, юная читательница!.. Эта трогательная связь не приносит мне ничего, кроме несчастий. Во-первых, моя «она», не отступая от меня день и ночь, не даёт мне заниматься делом. Она мешает мне читать, писать, гулять, наслаждаться природой... Я пишу эти строки, а она толкает меня под локоть и ежесекундно, как древняя Клеопатра не менее древнего Антония, манит меня к ложу. Во-вторых, она разоряет меня, как французская кокетка. За её привязанность я пожертвовал ей всем: карьерой, славой, комфортом... По её милости я хожу раздет, живу в дешёвом номере, питаюсь ерундой, пишу бледными чернилами. Всё, всё пожирает она, ненасытная! Я ненавижу её, презираю... Давно бы пора развестись с ней, но не развёлся я до сих пор не потому, что московские адвокаты берут за развод четыре тысячи... Детей у нас пока нет... Хотите знать её имя? Извольте... Оно поэтично и напоминает Лилию, Лелю, Нелли...

Её зовут — Лень.

(А. Чехов)

Translation of the analyzed text¹⁰

MY “HER”

She, as my parents and bosses authoritatively affirm, was born earlier than me. Whether or not they are right, I know only one thing: I don't remember any single day in my life when I didn't belong to her and didn't feel her power over me. She doesn't leave me alone day or

⁹ The text is cited from Chekhov (1974–1983).

¹⁰ The translation is mine – A. K.

night, nor do I make any effort to make off – the liaison is hence strong, lasting ... But do not envy me, Miss Young Reader!.. This touching liaison brings me nothing but misfortunes. Firstly, my “her” does not leave me day or night and does not let me do what I should. She prevents me from reading, writing, walking, enjoying nature... I’m writing these lines and she is prodding my elbow and incessantly beckons me to bed like ancient Cleopatra used to lure equally ancient Antony. Secondly, she brings me to ruin like a French courtesan. For the sake of her affection I have sacrificed everything – career, fame, comfort... Owing to her I walk around undressed, live in a cheap room, eat trash, write with pale ink. Insatiable, she devours everything, everything! I hate her, despise her... It’s high time I divorced her but I haven’t so far and not because Moscow lawyers take four thousands for a divorce. We don’t have children yet... Would you like to know her name? With pleasure... It is poetical and reminds one of Leila, Lessie, Hazel...

Her name is Laziness.

(A. Chekhov)

4 Analysis

The text tactics involve the author’s play with the reader, a discrepancy between their expectations and the ideas they perceive while reading the humoresque and the situation which is really being narrated. If one analyzes the actual plot of the story, it appears quite trivial: the narrator laments his laziness, which prevents him from succeeding in life. But the striking effect achieved by the humoresque is that until the very last word the reader does not guess this. Moreover, they cannot guess it because the author deliberately creates a false impression using special techniques. The following sections will address these techniques in detail.

4.1 Lexical-semantic analysis

The author’s manipulation of the reader commences with the very title. The title is an important tool to organize the readers’ perception in terms of prospection,¹¹ i.e. make them anticipate the text’s topic in a predetermined manner. The title *Моя ‘она’* (‘My “her”’) exploits this potential to the full. Apart from its primary function of anaphoric-cataphoric reference, the personal pronoun *она* (‘she’) is conventionally used to imply the meaning ‘smb’s beloved, lover, a character of a romance story’, as registered in Evgenyeva (1999: 618). This specific meaning can be clearly observed, for instance, in Pushkin’s poem “Она” (‘She’):

¹¹ For a study on text titles, see e.g. Etkind (1998).

- «Печален ты;
признайся, что с тобой».
- Люблю, мой друг! – «Но кто ж тебя пленила?»
- Она. – «Да кто ж? Глицера ль, Хлоя, Лиля?»
- О, нет! – «Кому ж ты жертвуешь душой?»
- Ах, ей! – «Ты скромн, друг сердечный!
- о почему ж ты столько огорчен? И кто виной? Супруг, отец, конечно...»
- Не то, мой друг! – «Но что ж?» – Я ей не он.¹²
- ‘Confess to me, what’s wrong. You’re in dejection.’
- I love, my friend! – ‘Which lady holds you captive?’
- She does. – ‘Glisera? Chloe? Lila’s so attractive?’
- O, no! – ‘To whom do you submit your soul’s affection?’
- To her! – ‘You’re humble! Why all this remorse?
- Why do you seem so sorrowful and grim? And who’s to blame? Her fiancé, her dad, of course... ’
- It isn’t that! – ‘Then what?’ – For *her*, I can’t be *him*.¹³

Hence, a reader at least slightly familiar with this literary tradition will understand the title as “My beloved”, but in an emotionally and stylistically tinged way, as “she” in such a context is bound to be the narrator’s object of adoration. It is also partly implied by the syntactic structure of the title. Normally, personal pronouns in their usual anaphoric-cataphoric function do not allow adjectival modifiers, as shown by the fact that a construction such as **Красивая она вышла из дома* (*‘Beautiful she left the house’) is impossible in actual language use. To define the pronoun’s referent, the attribute has to form a separate predicative unit: *Красивая, она вышла из дома* (‘Beautiful, she left the house’). This grammatical restriction does not apply to “her” as “beloved”: it functions as an ordinary noun and thus has a categorial valency for an agreed adjectival modifier, which in this case is realized by the possessive pronoun *моя* (‘my’).

The title is linked to the text itself in an explicit way: the word *она* (‘she’) is present in practically every sentence, which contributes to the textual cohesion. The impression that *she* is a woman is maintained throughout the whole text with the sole exception of the very last word. It is only the last word, *Laziness*, that makes the reader realize (and now already in retrospection, against the background of everything that has been read) what this “she” is, or more exactly that “she” does not at all designate a traditional romantic heroine but is just a cataphoric pronoun referring to a feminine noun further in the text. Moreover, it refers to an inanimate noun *лень* (‘laziness’) – an abstract notion, rather than

¹² Cited from Pushkin (1977–1979).

¹³ The translation is cited from Pushkin (2010).

the very tangible supposed heroine whose image was being evoked. This trick is possible due to the Russian grammatical system: the pronoun *она* ('she') can substitute for both animate (the supposed heroine) or inanimate nouns (laziness). Formally, the reader has no one but themselves to blame for the initial misunderstanding of the title and subsequently of the following text.

Furthermore, the text plays not only with the reader but also with the traditional *Her* image, and the sentimental romantic tradition in general, where *she* is the object of a male character's worship and adoration and where lexemes expressing clearly negative evaluations of *Her* are inadmissible. Chekhov thwarts these expectations with lines like: *Всё, всё пожирает она, ненасытная! Я ненавижу её, презираю...* ('*Insatiable, she devours everything, everything! I hate her, despise her...*').

The effect of deceived expectations is achieved mainly by the use of lexical means – by saturating the text with words and expressions belonging to the semantic field "Relationship between a man and a woman", or ones which due to polysemy can be attributed to this field in the right context: *принадлежать ей* ('belong to her'), *чувствовать над собой её власть* ('feel her power over me'), *трогательная связь* ('touching liaison'), *манить к ложу* ('beckon to bed'), *разорять, как французская кокетка* ('bring to ruin like a French courtesan'), *привязанность* (*affection*), *пожертвовать ей карьерой и славой* ('sacrifice to her one's career and fame'), *развод* ('divorce'), *дети* ('children'). The image of the supposed heroine is evoked by the use of actional or causative verbs, which suggest that "*she*" is a person: *она родилась* ('she was born', active voice form in Russian), *не покидает меня день и ночь* ('does not leave me day or night'), *не даёт заниматься делом* ('does not let me do what I should'); *она мешает мне* ('she prevents me from'); *она толкает меня под локоть* ('she is prodding my elbow') and *манит меня к ложу, как древняя Клеопатра* ('beckons me to bed like ancient Cleopatra'); *она разоряет меня как французская кокетка* ('she brings me to ruin like a French courtesan'). Only in retrospect can a reader understand that all these verbs were used figuratively. Finally, "*she*" has a name, which is an attribute of animate creatures but not of abstract notions. And even at the very end, when the secret of the real referent is revealed, the verbal play is continued to a certain extent, since *Лень* ('Laziness') is archly presented to the reader as a proper noun, the name of a heroine.

4.2 The subject perspective

As far as the dictum zone (zone of objective information) is concerned, there are two main subjects in the analyzed text: the protagonist and "her", but they have

a different status. The protagonist is always the subject of the base model (S_1), but he is rarely mentioned as the Subject of an action (*пожертвовать* – ‘sacrifice’, *писать* – ‘write’) and mainly appears as the Subject of a state (*принадлежать ей* – ‘belong to her’, *чувствовать над собой ее власть* – ‘feel her power’, etc.). Even if he becomes a subject of an action, it is mostly a negated or only potential action (he has not divorced her, he would like to walk, write or read but she does not let him). By contrast, “she” mostly functions as the Subject of an action (she prods the protagonist’s elbow, devours everything, etc.) and also a Causer (S_2) influencing the protagonist’s state: “she” prevents him from reading, writing, beckons him, brings him to ruin. Thus, on the grammatical level it is mostly “she” who appears to be the agent in the described situation while the protagonist plays the role of a patient: he is affected by other’s actions and does not initiate any activity himself. Other dictum subjects mentioned in the text are the “Moscow lawyers” but they do not play a significant role in the development of the text and belong to the background of the situation described.

In terms of the Modus zone, associated with predicates containing an interpretation of the dictum zone, three more types of subjects can be distinguished: the Authorizer, the one who owns the information (S_3), Speaker (S_4) and Addressee (S_5). Due to first person narration, S_4 (the Speaker) and S_1 (Subject of the base model) often coincide in the person of the protagonist. He is also sometimes an S_3 (Authorizer): *но я знаю только, что я не помню ни одного дня в моей жизни ...* (‘I know only one thing: I don’t remember any single day in my life ...’).

However, the narrator is not the only Authorizer in the text: *мои родители и начальники* (‘my parents and bosses’) are also attributed this function, even though they are introduced into the text incidentally, but, obviously, not by chance. This means that it is not the narrator only who has the “right” to speak and express his ideas but it is a tactic of the author to give a voice to those around his character. These “others” are introduced at the very beginning of the text (in the first sentence) to characterize the protagonist as a lazy person: what they actually imply is that his laziness prevails over his self. The protagonist strongly distances himself from their statement: he does not say *She was born earlier...* but he presents this information as coming from his parents and bosses, hence it is they who are responsible for its adequacy. The way they express their opinion is not as latent as it might seem. There is a Russian saying *Лень прежде нас родилась*, which can be literally translated as ‘Laziness was born before us’. It was registered in Dahl’s *Explanatory Dictionary* (Dahl 1863–1866), and can still be found in different variations in today’s blogs on the Internet. Thus, this saying could be easily recognized by both Chekhov’s contemporaries and present-day readers. I say “could,” not “is,” as only the last word of the text reveals

the true meaning of the first sentence. The magic of the text is that the author disperses clues to its understanding throughout the whole text and at the same time tricks the reader into ignoring these hints, deliberately creating a metaphor so vivid that it seems tangibly real. The reader does not find it strange that the protagonist's relatives and bosses take the trouble to comment on his lady's age, nor are they perplexed by her odd, sometimes almost maniacal behavior. They tolerate the improbability of this reading and with bated breath follow the catching story about the love-hate relationship which ends so suddenly and ironically.

It is significant that the "heroine" never becomes an Authorizer. This, of course, is not possible, since "she" is an abstract notion. "She" can only be a Subject of the dictum zone (S_1 or S_2); other characters can talk about her but she cannot have her own voice and, although on the semantic level "she" is presented as the most active character in the text, in retrospect all "her" actions turn out to be linguistic metaphors.

Another modus zone subject in the text is the Addressee (S_5). Like any artistic text, the humoresque is addressed to a reader. But there is one more plane in Chekhov's text. The narrator directly addresses his reader: *Но не завидуйте, юная читательница!*.. ('But do not envy me, Miss Young Reader!'). Naming Miss Young Reader, he identifies the audience to whom his "tragic story" might be interesting (his target audience, as we would say today) as young women given to reading unsophisticated romances. He genially banters about their naivety, referring to their "great expectations". It is not just a literary device of intimization when an author "includes" his reader in the reality of the fiction that they create. The image of the sentimental Miss Young Reader expecting to hear a story about the narrator's fatal love ironizes this literary romantic tradition. With all this, one should keep in mind that just as it is not justified to equate the author with the narrator,¹⁴ the actual audience the text is intended for is not at all Miss Young Reader.

4.3 Textual time

Another text category from FCG that casts light on the text is the textual time. Unlike in the excerpt in Table 1, the textual time of the humoresque is quite

¹⁴ Interestingly enough, A. Chekhov used almost the same wording referring to himself in his letter to C. S. Alekseev (Stanislavski), 5 February 1903: "I was ill but now I have revived, my health is better and if I am currently not working as I should, then blame for that cold (it's only 11 degrees in my study room), solitude and, probably, *laziness*, which was *born* in 1859, i.e. *a year before I was born*." (emphasis and translation are mine, A. K.).

linear, following the actual line of events. The present tense is dominant, with several “flashbacks” to events in the past. The “observation point” does not move from the physical “now” of the speaker (S4).

According to Zolotova et al. (2004: 22–26), three temporal axes can be specified in a text. Axis T_1 represents the notion of calendar, physical time, external to the text and based on human consciousness of objective time. In this text, T_1 is not specified, it is impossible to determine exactly when in human history the described situation takes place. Nonetheless, such historical personalities as Cleopatra and Antony are mentioned – and both are characterized as extremely “ancient” from the speaker’s point of view; then the supposed heroine is compared to a French courtesan, which also links the narration to a certain period (at least not earlier than courtesans became part of the social landscape).

Axis T_2 stands for event time, i.e. the events constituting the plot of the text. Whether or not the T_2 axis is projected onto the T_1 axis, all the predicates in a coherent text are connected in terms of taxis (simultaneity or time difference, precedence or posteriority). The narration in Chekhov’s text covers a time period starting from the birth of the supposed heroine. She was born earlier than the protagonist, making this the earliest event on the T_2 axis. The period covered reaches up to the point at which the protagonist, as an adult, falls into the state of misery when due to his *femme fatale* he is almost broke and lives in poor conditions.

The final stage of T_2 is simultaneous with the moment of speech. It means that the event time T_2 – the time of the heroine and the protagonist – and T_3 , the perceptive axis describing the position of the speaker in time and space in relation to the events of the text, coincide at this point: *Я пишу эти строки, а она толкает меня под локоть ...* (‘I’m writing these lines and she is prodding my elbow ...’). T_3 also becomes the time of Miss Young Reader, as the narrator addresses her in the text.

In retrospect, after the text has been read until the very end, the duration of the event time T_2 shrinks: the starting point becomes the birth of the protagonist, as the reader realizes there is no heroine at all. Apart from this, no changes occur on the T_2 axis. The protagonist is passive, and the only character who seemed active, “her”, proves to be a sheer metaphor, so no action takes place. The time axis T_3 does not change: the narrator recalls the course of his life until his present moment. The projection onto the chronological axis T_1 also remains the same.

The grammatical tense-aspect pattern of the text follows the organization of the textual time. The tense-aspect forms of Russian verbs can fulfill specific semantic functions, i.e. aoristive, perfective and imperfective (Zolotova et al.

2004: 27–28).¹⁵ The combination of these semantic functions creates stereoscopic time–space fullness of a text. Verbs in the aoristive function (dynamic action) organize narrative. Perfective function launches states (of a person, object or space) as the result of some previous action. Verbs in imperfective-processual function describe actions in their duration without time limitations; in imperfective-characterizing function the speaker presents actions, states and relations as a usual pastime or skills from a temporal and spatial distance. Applying this classification to Chekhov’s text, one can notice that there are almost no verbs in aoristive function in it and this is not by coincidence. The aoristive function is one of the devices for constructing a dynamic narration (as opposed to descriptive texts), vectoring it to its denouement. In Chekhov’s text, as a reader understands in retrospect, no action takes place, since the case in point is the narrator’s character trait, not his relationship with a woman. Thus, only verbs in the imperfective or perfective function are suitable. Perfective function launches the state, at the same time referring to past actions or states (*не развелся я до сих пор ...* – ‘I have not divorced her so far ...’). The rest of the text is organized in the present tense form.¹⁶ Only two verbs present the processual function (*Я пишу эти строки ...* – ‘I am writing these lines ...’, *она толкает меня под локоть* – ‘she is prodding my elbow’) and in first-person narration a present form in such function signals that T₂ and T₃ merge. However, the major part of the text is constructed with the present tense form in the characterizing function, which indicates that there are no real events on the T₂ axis (or there are some repeating minor events – but no major outstanding event).

4.4 Registers

Horizontally, the text can be divided into register blocks. As discussed in Section 2, the term *registers* stands for communicative types of speech presenting different levels of abstraction. Vertically, semantic types of predicates and models of the sentence are allocated in-between the zones of narration dynamics (models with the meaning of action and process) and statics of description (models with the meaning of qualities, states and relation). In

¹⁵ These are not terms for tense forms but for their functions. There are only two grammar past tense-aspect forms in Russian language but in certain contexts they may fulfill different functions. Verbs in perfective aspect form have either aoristive or perfective functions, while verbs in imperfective aspect have imperfective processual or characterizing functions.

¹⁶ There is one present tense form in the Russian language.

Chekhov's text they are organized in the way represented by the following scheme:

1. Informative narrative block (*She, as my parents and bosses authoritatively affirm, was born earlier than me*).
2. Informative descriptive block (*Whether or not they are right, I know only one thing: I don't remember any single day in my life when I didn't belong to her and didn't feel her power over me*).
3. Informative narrative block (*She doesn't leave me alone day or night, nor do I make any effort to make off...*).
4. Informative descriptive block (*– the liaison is hence strong, lasting...*).
5. Volutive block (*But do not envy me, Miss Young Reader!...*).
6. Informative descriptive block (*This touching liaison brings me nothing but misfortunes*).
7. Informative narrative block (*Firstly, my "her" does not leave me day or night and does not let me do what I should. She prevents me from reading, writing, walking, enjoying nature...*).
8. Reproductive narrative block (*I'm writing these lines and she is prodding my elbow...*).
9. Informative narrative block (*...and incessantly beckons me to bed like ancient Cleopatra used to lure equally ancient Antony. Secondly, she brings me to ruin like a French courtesan*).
10. Informative narrative block (*For the sake of her affection I have sacrificed everything – career, fame, comfort...*).
11. Informative descriptive block (*Owing to her I walk around undressed, live in a cheap room, eat trash, write with pale ink*).
12. Reactive block (*Insatiable, she devours everything, everything!*).
13. Informative descriptive block (*It's high time I divorced her but I haven't so far and not because Moscow lawyers take four thousands for a divorce. We don't have children yet...*).
14. Volutive block (*Would you like to know her name?*).
15. Reactive block (*With pleasure...*).
16. Informative descriptive block (*It is poetical and reminds one of Leila, Lessie, Hazel... Her name is Laziness*).

As one can notice from the scheme, there is almost no reproductive register in the text. The narration is carried on at a more abstract level: all the facts about "her" and her qualities are given in speculation, not in sensory perception of the speaker (S4), with the exception of block 8. Logically, laziness, as an abstract notion, cannot be seen, heard, smelled or touched. But it can be still reflected on – which is the modus frame of the informative register. There is

almost no descriptive subtype either, thus the reader does not “see” the supposed heroine and has no idea about her appearance. The reader depicts the image based exclusively on her ruinous influence on the protagonist. Narrative subtype of the informative register (1, 3, 7, 9), dominating in the parts of the text which refer to her, helps the author to create the illusion of the material existence of the heroine.

There are several dialogic blocks which establish contact with the reader. But if block 5 addresses the imaginary Miss Young Reader, blocks 12, 14, 15 make the real reader feel involved. In retrospect, the first sentence acquires an obvious link to the saying *Laziness was born before us* (generative register), which expands the space of the text and gives it a more universal meaning, making the reader compare themselves to the protagonist.

By contrast, when it comes to the protagonist, the share of descriptive subtype goes up, which helps to create an image of a passive person: he does not act in the true sense of the word, but “she” is presented as an acting character and in retrospect turns out to be a subjective cause. The effect is achieved, inter alia, by the choice of sentence structures.

- (3) *Во-первых, моя ‘она’, не отступая от меня день и ночь, **не даёт** мне **заниматься делом***
 ‘Firstly, my “her” **does not leave** me day or night and **does not let** me do what I should’
- (4) ***Она мешает** мне читать, писать, гулять, наслаждаться природой...*
 ‘**She prevents** me **from** reading, writing, walking, enjoying nature...’
- (5) *... **она толкает** меня под локоть и ежесекундно ... **манит** меня к ложу*
 ‘... **she is prodding** my elbow and incessantly **beckons** me to bed’
- (6) *... **она разоряет** меня, как французская кокетка ‘Secondly, **she brings** me **to ruin** like a French courtesan’*

If analyzed within formal syntax methodology, the structural scheme of sentences (3)–(6) is N_1V_f ,¹⁷ which means a noun in the nominative form plus a finite verb make the core of a sentence of this type. With the supposed personal subject ‘она’ (‘she’), sentences of this structure imply that the subject performs an action

¹⁷ For the list of the minimal structural schemes of Russian sentences, see Beloshapkova et al. (1989: 632–659).

named by the verb. However, in terms of proposition (semantic model of the situation a sentence refers to), it is the protagonist who is the subject of the situation, and “she” is just a Causer (Causative), a circumstantial eventive actant.

Secondly, the author plays on the systemic polysemy of some verbs, e.g. *мешать* (‘prevent from, disturb’), *манить* (‘beckon, attract’), which can be both actional or inactional. The semantic ambiguity of the predicates contributes to that of the text and, bolstered by the lexis that explicitly suggests that “she” is a woman (*affection, divorce*), makes the reader consider only one interpretation (romance relationship). But when the reader finds out what trick has been played on them, the narration automatically loses its dynamics and becomes static: the protagonist has always been lazy, he does not seem to struggle, has never done and is not going to change.

5 Conclusion

Communicative grammar model of text analysis suggests association of specific language units and categories in the text with the author’s tactics and hypothetically reconstructed strategy (artistic conception), as illustrated by the analysis of Chekhov’s text in Section 4.

Sidorova (2011a) develops the idea that an artistic text is a sum of projections (onto the language system, texts, symbolic system, ideological preferences, properties accumulated in the text itself, knowledge about the world and cultural and historical background, etc.):

the amount of projections, consciously or unconsciously made by a reader, depends on their qualification (language command, general erudition etc.). But the fact is that any work of literature provides material for projections, and the more active (though sometimes misleading) such projection activity is, the more fully the text realizes itself in the aesthetic communication between the author and the reader. (Sidorova 2011a: 128)

Chekhov’s mastery of text techniques allows him to trigger misleading projections at all levels. He uses the language system’s potential (e.g. systemic polysemy of some verbs that can be comprehended as both actional and non-actional, or the pronoun *she* referring to both animate and inanimate nouns) and the reader’s awareness of literature genres (traditional use of “she” as “lover”). The “heroine,” “she”, is included directly in the theme of the first sentence, as far as the topic-comment structure is concerned. This way, the reader is brought directly into the chronotope of the characters, *in medias res* of the proposed drama. The suspense subsequently accumulates: “she” appears to be the prevailing theme of the whole text, explicitly or implicitly, always referred to as

“she”. The organization of the subject perspective, textual time and registers in the text is stipulated, on the one hand, by the true referent – an abstract notion of laziness (e.g. reproductive register with an abstract noun is normally impossible) and, on the other hand, by the author’s intent to maintain the impression about her as a person: the sole exceptional inclusion of a reproductive block with “her” as a subject (block 8, which in retrospect proves to be used figuratively) contributes greatly to the misleading effect.

The idea of “her” as a woman supported throughout the whole text creates what Galperin refers to as figurative cohesion, a type of cohesion that, “echoing the associative links, arouses an image of objects of sensorily perceived reality” (Galperin 1981: 80). Such an organization of the text keeps it coherent on the macrolevel and belongs to the textual tactics, allowing to picture a quite tangible and integral image of a female character, without naming. Together with Miss Young Reader we portray in our minds the image of a woman ... crafty, devilishly attractive and seductive. The weak-willed protagonist cannot resist her charms but we forgive him for the sake of his ruinous passion. The comic effect of the humoresque (the text’s strategy) consists in the effect of deceived expectations when it becomes clear that what is at issue is not a person but a personal quality of the speaking character.

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Bionote

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