

*Література зарубіжних країн*

**УДК 82.801**

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**LITERARY FEATURES OF SYNTACTIC REPRESENTATION OF THE  
CONCEPT OF THE CITY IN THE NOVEL ‘THE KITE RUNNER’ BY  
KHALED HOSSINI**

**A.O. Muntian, I.V. Shpak Literary features of syntactic representation of  
the concept of the city in the novel ‘The Kite Runner’ by Khaled Hossini**

**Annotation:**

The purpose of this piece is an attempt to analyze literary features of syntactic representation of the concept of the city in the novel by Afghan-American writer Khaled Hossini under the title “The Kite Runner.” The basis for the term “concept” is the study of the semantic language system. Among the scholars involved in the study of this branch of linguistics are Aristotle, Arutyunova, Vynogradov, Grigoriev, Humboldt, Carnap, Lewis, Potebnya, Russell, and others. The concepts are used as ready-made cliches (in analogy to grammatical forms) in completely different, inappropriate contexts, without thinking of what meaning is enshrined in this word in the minds of most people, which serves the recipient as the basis for understanding the relayed sense. Linguistic meanings convey only a part of our knowledge of the world. The main part of this knowledge is preserved in our consciousness in the form

of various mental structures – concepts of varying degrees of complexity and abstraction, in the content of which new characteristics can be constantly included. The study of each author's concept enables detection of generalities and specifics in a particular segment, which contributes to a better understanding of systemic laws in general. Under the concept, we will consider the totality of knowledge and perceptions associated with this concept, and associations (both individual and culturally fixed), linking it with other phenomena. The writer's view of the city is the textualization of reality, the embodiment of the “stranger”, the boy who left and then returned for the only reason of not recognizing the city that once he belonged to and most certainly still does to some extent. On the one hand, the image of the city is quite realistic, it lives in the ages of its complex and controversial fate, on the other hand, appears to be an illusion, a model of simulation.

**Key words:** concept, notion, syntactic representation, linguistic meaning, novel, literary concept.

Although the term “concept” is relatively new in philology, there are grounds to say that its formation and development continued throughout the development of philosophical thought. There is the opinion that the basis for the term is the study of the semantic language system. Among the scholars involved in the study of this branch of linguistics are Aristotle, Arutyunova, Vynogradov, Grigoriev, Humboldt, Carnap, Lewis, Potebnya, Russell, and others [1, p. 18].

**The purpose of this piece is an attempt to analyze literary features of syntactic representation of the concept of the city in the novel by Afghan-American writer Khaled Hossini under the title “The Kite Runner.”**

Many a scientist tried to define the notion of a concept, according to Askoldiv, it is “an imaginary entity that substitutes for us in the process of thought an indefinite set of objects of the same kind” [2, p.224]. We emphasize that this “imaginary formation”, in the opinion of the scientist, does not correspond to the idea of a single subject, but corresponds to the reflection in the minds of the “whole uncertain set” of entities – objects, “some aspects of an object or real actions”, relations between

entities (up to the imaginary functions “of the type of mathematical operations”) [2, p.224]. Such “imaginary formation” in the individual consciousness may not coincide with the set of “imaginary formations” that arose in the minds of other people, but they all include some sort of a set of matching features. In other words, a person may very peculiarly understand what their debt to a society is, a certain social group or another person can consider themselves conscientious, modest, noble, etc., when others do not see the mentioned qualities in them, but not taking claims to their behavior, they know perfectly well what parameters of behavior are considered to be benchmarks for an abstract subject who claims to be called conscientious, modest, noble, etc., and fulfils their duty.

Using the term “concept” to nominate “an element of consciousness, which is denoted by the word”, Popova writes: “In this connection, it is often said about the notion, but it is very inaccurate, because the word can mean not only the notion, but the generalized image, and if it denotes the notion, then only that, which was subjected to the influence of the semantic system of language and in combination with emotional coloring and stylistic shades” [3, p.25]. As it can be seen, in the application to different parts of the lexical system of language, the term “concept” can be filled with different senses. For example, in relation to terminology, perhaps, it is possible to put a sign of equality between a concept and a notion, and in relation to the regular and everyday vocabulary, this cannot be done: in the meaning of the word, not all the signs of the concept are embodied, but it includes a number of other signs, the appearance of which is due to “relations of the word to others words” and the presence in it of a “social color, organically associated with the historical destiny of the sound complex” [4, p.26].

It is obvious that the organizing principle of the concept is the primary representation that appears in the etymon (if etymon is understood as “the source, or the basic form” of the linguistic unit, “conceivable as correct, original, and true” [2, p. 529]). Therefore, as it is emphasized by Stepanova, the description of the concepts “has at least one, very solid foundation – the literal meaning of the custom, belief, or word. This is every time – the starting point and further development of the concept

in the very mental reality, in the actual existing collective consciousness, and in the development of the researcher's hypothesis, which he builds on this" [5, p. 55].

It is worth adding as well that Stepanova's point of view on the whole is not opposed to the points of view of other scholars, who put forward one – either logical or psychological – basis of the concept. To varying degrees, each of the researchers notes that the concept can be both individual and collective representation. For example, Askoldov in the article "Concept and the Word" [1928, writes that concepts can express the individual vision of the world (artistic concepts) and collectiveness (concepts of cognition). Pavilinis speaks of "the social orientation of individual conceptual systems in the direction of a socially meaningful picture of the world" [6, p.263], and Frumkina agrees that "different languages are conceptualized", that is, they refract reality in different ways" [7, p.3]. As for Ivanov, he figuratively calls the concept "a kind of algebraic expression of meaning", with the help of which we (all the speakers of the language) operate in our written and oral speech" [8, p.4], and Demyanov says that the consciousness of one person can simultaneously belong to the concepts of different levels: "One concept sphere can be combined with another – say, the concept sphere of the Russian language as a whole, but there is the concept sphere of an engineer, and there is the concept of the family, and there is an individual concept sphere" [9, p.5], and they all may co-exist and be mixed in one.

The presence of a multi-stage system of conceptospheres within a single language is confirmed by the fact that in a microcollection of the bearers of one language, some language or linguistic units can acquire a specific, unknown meaning to the whole community of the given language. At first glance, it is possible to qualify as a use on the scale of all the multitude of language users. However, the use, as is known, differs with the singularity of the use of one or another unit in a more or less unusual form or sense. Consequently, the concept as the notion in its expression from the linguistic point of view cannot be limited exclusively to lexical or lexical-phraseological level. Its implementation is multifaceted. The subtleties of conceptual meaning are manifested both in linguistic units and in the space of speech.

Thus, under the concept, we will consider the totality of knowledge and perceptions associated with this concept, and associations (both individual and culturally fixed), linking it with other phenomena.

There is a point of view that the meaning of linguistic means is equivalent to the concepts or conceptual structures expressed in them (Jekendoff), and another point of view – that notion in a certain respect is independent of the language (Vezhbítska). In essence, the last statement differs little from the first, because it also allows one to identify notions with concepts. However, such interpretations of the linguistic meaning do not seem to be quite legitimate. Suffice it to say that in this case, in the semantic structure of the meaning of each word, we must distinguish individual components of meaning, and this will remove the existing (recognized by all and canonized) distinction between meaning and sense. Concepts as elements of consciousness are completely autonomous from the language. Our thinking is non-verbal in nature, and this is a well-established fact. Another proof in favor of this is that people often speak words not at the level of their meaning, but at the level of their relayed sense, that is, at the level of concepts and conceptual features. They use them as ready-made clichés (in analogy to grammatical forms) in completely different, inappropriate contexts, without thinking of what meaning is enshrined in this word in the minds of most people, which serves the recipient as the basis for understanding the relayed sense. This is especially obvious if one looks at a phraseological example – some statements by well-known political figures: “I do not dig land among the deputies” or: “My head is far from thought.” The consequence of this is the wrong use of words and expressions that do not make sense or convey a completely different meaning than they suppose to convey. All this testifies to the autonomy of language and thinking, and that language notions cannot be equated to concepts. Obviously, linguistic means by their meaning convey only a part of the concept, which is confirmed by the existence of numerous synonyms, different definitions, definitions and text descriptions of the same concept. The meaning of a word is just an attempt to give a general idea of the meaning of the expression of the concept, to outline the known limits, to present its individual characteristics by the

given word [1, p.56]. According to Kubryakova, the meaning of the word becomes only a concept, “captured by a sign” [10, p.34]. Therefore, the relationship between notions and concepts is complex. For example, all people know that pleasant events cause in a person a sense of joy. However, the meaning of the words: joy, solemnity celebration, light spot, joyful, bright, shining, cheerful, triumphant, merry, happy, in the seventh heaven – reflect only a certain part of the content of this concept. Another example is conjugations, pronouns, particles, with which it is difficult to identify a particular meaning. At the same time, everyone understands the concepts behind them: the connection, the opposition, the indication, the replacement of an object or person. The most perspective are the multilevel concepts of meaning, which proceed from the idea of a consistent separation of the conceptual and semantic (linguistic) levels of knowledge representation [11, p.56]. This means that cognitive and semantic analysis require a different level of abstraction. Linguistic meanings convey only a part of our knowledge of the world. The main part of this knowledge is preserved in our consciousness in the form of various mental structures – concepts of varying degrees of complexity and abstraction, in the content of which new characteristics can be constantly included. These characteristics, in their turn, will require new forms of verbalization. At the same time, the concepts themselves in the case of addition of fundamentally new characteristics and acquiring the status of independent concepts can receive a secondary representation in the language (for example, continuations of popular novels, parodies, stage performances of famous literary works, fan fiction, the formation of derivative concepts based on existing ones: democratization, denationalization, reinterpretation, reorientation, etc.). In this case, of course, there is a problem of determining the degree of dependence of language on the cognitive experience of a person and for solving this problem many theories and methods of cognitive and semantic modeling of speech were created.

Literary concepts presented in a literary works, primarily reflect author’s point of view, his vision, yet at the same time they actualize values and meanings that axiologically are interesting and important for readers. “The author – as Zuszhan points out – brings to the concept his or her individual meanings, notions and senses,

which are different from those in common language, because of the author's system of values and specific worldview. The study of each author's concept enables detection of generalized and specific in a particular segment, which contributes to a better understanding of systemic laws in general. In the literary concept the author's notions, representations, emotions, feelings, and volitional acts are sublimed. The content of the concept depends on the genre specificity of the text and the features of the author's conceptual sphere." [12, p.32].

To make an attempt to analyze literary features of syntactic representation of the concept of the city in the novel "The Kite Runner" by Khaled Hossini it is worth looking at the syntactic structure of the text of this novel and tracing the forms of expression of the concept of on a non-verbal level.

The novel has a semi-biographical character, so the author describes his life in his hometown, the capital of Afghanistan, Kabul, and the city of San Francisco, to which he emigrated with his family. Therefore, on the pages of the novel, we see descriptions of not only an ancient oriental city, but also of the American metropolis:

*"I went for a walk along the Spreckels Lake on the northern edge of the Golden Gate Park. The early afternoon sun sparkled on the water where dozens of miniature boats were sailing, propelled by a crisp breeze. Then I glanced up and saw a pair of kites, red with long blue tails, soaring in the sky. They danced high above the trees on the west end of the park, over the windmills, floating side by side like a pair of eyes looking down on San Francisco, the city I call now home."* [13]

Along with this, the author begins his novel with sharing the most memorable children's memories related to Kabul:

*"When we were children, Hassan and I used to climb the poplar trees in the driveway of my father's house and annoy our neighbors by reflecting sunlight into their homes with a shard of mirror. We would sit across from each other on a pair of high branches, our naked feet dangling, our trouser pockets filled with dried mulberries and walnuts."*

*We took turns with the mirror as we ate mulberries, pelted each other with them, giggling, laughing.” [13]*

Changing the life of the city, the war changes the lives of its inhabitants. About this, Khaled Hosseini also talks starting from the first pages of the novel:

*“I looked up at those twin kites. I thought about Hassan. Thought about Baba. Ali Kabul I thought of the life I had lived until the winter of 1975 came along and changed everything. And I made me what I am today.” [13]*

Kabul is home to the protagonist, his native city. He loves it, cherishes the memory of the city as it used to be before the military invasion, destruction, breakout of war and years of decay. When the protagonist shares his story, descriptions of the city the way he remembers it, it helps the reader to picture that magnificent city, to feel its rhythm, its pace, to understand how that city lived and worked. He describes minor details of lifestyle of townsfolk, conveys the atmosphere in which he used to live.

*“Everyone agreed that my father, my Baba, had built the most beautiful house in the Wazir Akbar Khan district, a new and affluent neighborhood in the northern part of Kabul. Some thought it was the prettiest house in all of Kabul. A broad entranceway flanked by rosebushes led to a sprawling house of marble floors and wide windows. Intricate mosaic tiles, handpicked by Baba in Isfahan, covered floors of the four bathrooms. Gold-stitched tapestries, which Baba had bought in Calcutta, lined the walls; a crystal chandelier hung from the swinging ceiling.” [13]*

Kabul is the childhood city of the author, so it is not surprising that almost all of his descriptions are, one way or another, related to the memories of childhood, and on the pages of the novel the reader may see 12-year-old boy for whom Kabul is a playground for kite competitions, as well as great many symbols of his childhood:

*“Every winter, districts in Kabul held a kite-fighting tournament. And if you were a boy living in Kabul, the day of the tournament was*

*undoubtedly the highlight of the cold season. I never slept the night before the tournament. I'd roll from side to side, make shadow animals on the wall, even sit on the balcony in the dark, a blanket wrapped around me. I felt like a soldier trying to sleep in the trenches the night before a major battle. And that was not so far away. In Kabul, fighting kites was a little like going to war.” [13]*

War is another powerful topic of the novel. The author's attitude to war is intolerable. While reading the text, the reader has the feeling of repulsion towards war; it is something that ruined both the protagonist and author's home:

*“Something roared like a thunder. The earth shook a little and we heard the rat-a-tat-tat of gunfire. “Father!” Hassan cried. Kabul awoke the next morning to find that the monarchy was a thing of the past. The king, Zahir Shah, was away in Italy. In his absence, his cousin Daoud Khan ended the king's forty-year reign with a bloodless coup.” [13]*

Also, the reader may detect a historical motive on the pages of Hossini's novel:

*“For the next couple of years, the words economic development and reform danced on a lot of lips in Kabul. The constitutional monarchy was abolished, replaced by a republic, led by a president of the republic. For a while, a sense of rejuvenation and purpose swept across the land. People spoke about women's rights and modern technology.” [13]*

Returning to Kabul in search of his nephew, Amir sees the changes that have taken place during his absence from Afghan's capital:

*“By then – that would have been 1995 – the Shorawiwere defeated and long gone; Kabul belonged to Massoud, Rabbani, and Mujahedin. The infighting between the factions was fierce and no one knew if they would live to see the end of the day.” [13]*

So Kabul, full of anxiety, tears and grief, sees a longtime friend of Amir's father, who writes in his letter:

*“Alas the Afghanistan of our youth is long dead. Kindness is gone from the land and you cannot escape the killings. Always the killings. In Kabul, fear is everywhere, in the streets, in the stadium, in the markets, this is part of our lives here, Amir agha. The savages who rule our watan do not care about human dignity.” [13]*

In general, one can conclude that the city in Hossini’s novel appears as a volatile, dynamic essence, but at the same time, an object full of sentimental memories. For the writer the motif of the clash of the cultural-national archetype of the city with its true reality is important. The sense of wartime – the era of crisis, instability, uncertainty, questions and searches is important. A beautiful hometown of city-dreams turns into an alienated distorted shadow city; turns to a ghost town, where everything is false and artificial. The writer's view of the city is the textualization of reality, the embodiment of the “stranger”, the boy who left and then returned for the only reason of not recognizing the city that once he belonged to and most certainly still does to some extent. On the one hand, the image of the city is quite realistic, it lives in the ages of its complex and controversial fate, on the other hand, appears to be an illusion, a model of simulation. Khaled Hossini through his novel “The Kite Runner” expressed his love for his native city of Kabul, the city in which he was born and raised. The description of the city goes from one addressee: we hear the voice of one character, Amir, a 12 year old boy who was born and raised in Kabul, and Amir, 45, who returned to Kabul to redeem his old sins, and found his childhood city devastated after the war. Such a complex concept as the concept of city is explained and understood by people through the stereotyped perception of various cities belonging to the material world itself.

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**А.О. Мунтян, І.В. Шпак Літературні риси синтаксичної репрезентації концепту «місто» у романі Халеда Хоссіні «Той, що біжить за вітром»**

### **Анотація:**

Метою цієї статті є спроба проаналізувати літературні особливості синтаксичної репрезентації концепту міста в романі афгансько-американського письменника Халеда Хоссіні під назвою «Той, що біжить за вітром». Основою терміну «концепт» є вивчення семантичної мовної системи. Серед вчених, які займаються вивченням цієї галузі мовознавства – Аристотель, Арутюнова, Виноградов, Григор'єв, Гумбольдт, Карнап, Льюїс, Потебня, Рассел та інші. Концепти використовуються як готові кліше (за аналогією з граматичними формами) в зовсім іншому контексті, не замислюючись про те, який сенс закріплений в цьому слові у свідомості більшості людей, який служить реципієнту за основу для розуміння значення, яке передається. Лінгвістичне значення передає лише частину нашого знання про світ. Основна частина цього знання зберігається у нашій свідомості у вигляді різних ментальних структур – концептів різного ступеня складності та абстракції, в зміст яких можуть постійно додаватись нові характеристики. Вивчення концептів кожного автора дозволяє виявити узагальнення та специфічні відмінності у кожному сегменті, що сприяє кращому розумінню системних законів загалом. Під концептом ми розуміємо сукупність знань та сприйняття, пов'язаних з цим концептом, а також асоціацій (як індивідуальних, так і загальноприйнятих), пов'язуючи їх з іншими явищами. Погляд письменника на місто – це текстуалізація реальності, повернення «вже чужого», хлопчика, який залишив рідне місто, а потім повернувся тільки для того, щоб не впізнати місто, яке колись було рідним для нього і, найімовірніше, до певної міри таким і залишається. З одного боку, образ міста досить реалістичний: воно живе в епоху своєї складної і суперечливої долі, з іншого боку, здається, ілюзією, моделлю для симуляції.

**Ключові слова:** поняття, концепт, синтаксична репрезентація, лінгвістичне значення, роман, літературний концепт.

**А.А. Мунтян, И.В. Шпак Литературные характеристики синтаксической репрезентации концепта «город» в романе Халеда Хоссини «Бегущий за ветром»**

**Аннотация:**

Целью этой статьи является попытка проанализировать литературные особенности синтаксической репрезентации концепта города в романе афгано-американского писателя Халеда Хоссини под названием «Бегущий за ветром». Основой термина «концепт» является изучение семантической языковой системы. Среди ученых, занимающихся изучением этой отрасли языкознания – Аристотель, Арутюнова, Виноградов, Григорьев, Гумбольдт, Карнап, Льюис, Потенция, Рассел и другие. Концепты используются как готовые клише (по аналогии с грамматическими формами) в совершенно ином контексте, не задумываясь о том, какой смысл закреплен в этом слове в сознании большинства людей, который служит реципиенту основой для понимания значения, которое передается. Лингвистическое значение передает только часть нашего знания о мире. Основная часть этого знания сохраняется в нашем сознании в виде различных ментальных структур – концептов разной степени сложности и абстракции, в содержание которых могут постоянно добавляться новые характеристики. Изучение концептов каждого автора позволяет выявить обобщения и специфические отличия в каждом сегменте, что способствует лучшему пониманию системных законов в целом. Под концептом мы понимаем совокупность знаний и восприятий, связанных с этим концептом, а также ассоциаций (как индивидуальных, так и общепринятых), связывая их с другими явлениями. Взгляд писателя на город – это текстуализация реальности, возвращение «уже чужого», мальчика, который покинул родной город, а потом вернулся только для того, чтобы не узнать город, который когда-то был родным для него и, скорее всего, в определенной степени таким и остается. С одной стороны, образ города достаточно реалистичный: он проживает свою сложную и противоречивую судьбу, с другой стороны, кажется, что он живет иллюзией, моделью для симуляции.

**Ключевые слова:** понятие, концепт, синтаксическая репрезентация, лингвистическое значение, роман, литературный концепт.