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EMOTIVE STRATEGIES IN ENGLISH POETIC TEXTS WITHIN AUTHORITARIAN DISCOURSE

Abstract

The article aims to uncover emotive strategies in poetic texts written under authoritarian regimes. Within the authoritarian discourse (which is viewed upon in the article as an asymmetric type of discourse), poetic text is used as a manipulative tool to strengthen the authority of the state leader, reinforce propagandistic ideas, or declare injustice in society. The material for the study consists of English translations of poetic texts written by authors who played or continue to play various roles in the public life of a particular country. In particular, the study analyses poetic texts by an author-dictator, a poet of the regime, and dissident poets. It is stated that emotive strategy is the author's conscious use of emotional triggers, which are marked in poetic texts by networks of expressive means and stylistic devices that are designed to evoke such emotions as admiration, loyalty, fear, or humiliation in recipients in order to achieve ideological goals. In poetic texts, the emotive strategy reflects the transition from one emotional state of the addresser to another. With regard to this, the article distinguishes between primary and secondary images of emotions. The primary image of emotion is an internal feeling that serves as a starting point or stimulus for the formation of the target / purposeful emotion in a poetic text. In the article, the concept of a "purposeful emotion image" is used synonymously with the term "secondary emotion image". The analysis of emotive strategies reveals specific features of their development depending on the authors' roles of authors in society: the transition from anger to humiliation in the text of the author-dictator; the transition from the implicit real emotion of fear to the constructed, fabricated emotion of ideological respect or awe in the text of the regime-influenced poet; and the emotive shift from despair and indignation to hope and solidarity in the texts of dissident poets.

Keywords: poetic text, discourse, stylistic device, function, emotiveness.

Анотація

Статтю присвячено вивченю емотивних стратегій у поетичних текстах, написаних в умовах авторитарних режимів. У межах авторитарного дискурсу (асиметричний тип дискурсу) поетичний текст використовується як маніпулятивний інструмент для посилення авторитету лідера держави, пропагандистських ідей або для оголошення несправедливості в суспільстві. Матеріалом дослідження послугували англійськомовні переклади текстів поезії, написаної авторами, які відігравали / відіграють різні ролі в суспільному житті певної країни, крім Сполученого Королівства Великої Британії та США, оскільки в цих країнах панує демократичний лад. Зокрема проаналізовано поетичні тексти автора-диктатора, поета режиму та поетів-дисидентів. З'ясовано, що емотивна стратегія – це свідоме використання автором емоційних тригерів, що маркуються в поетичних текстах зображенально-виражальними засобами та стилістичними прийомами, які покликані викликати в реципієнтів такі емоції, як: захоплення, вірність, страх чи приниження для досягнення ідеологічних цілей. Емотивна стратегія відображає в тексті переход від одного емоційного стану адресанта до іншого. З огляду на це, у статті розрізняються первинні й вторинні образи емоцій. Первинний образ емоції являє собою внутрішнє почуття, яке слугує початковою точкою або стимулом до формування цільової емоції в поетичному тексті. У статті поняття "образ цільової емоції" синонімічне до терміна "образ вторинної емоції". Аналіз емотивних стратегій виявив певні особливості їхнього розгортання, зважаючи на різні ролі авторів у суспільстві: переход від гніву до приниження в тексті автора-диктатора; переход від імплицитної реальної емоції страху до сконструйованої, сфабрикованої емоції ідеологічної шані чи благоговіння в тексті поета, який зазнав впливу режиму; емотивний зсув від відчую й обурення до надії та солідарності в текстах поетів-дисидентів.

Ключові слова: поетичний текст, дискурс, стилістичний засіб, функція, емотивність.

*In a free country, it is the duty of writers
to pay no attention to duty. Only under a dictatorship
is literature expected to exhibit a harmonious design
or an inspirational tone.*

E.B. White

*Only the strong can be free.
And only the productive can be strong.*

W. Willkie

Introduction. Professor Olexandr Morohovsky, the founder of the Department of English Lexicology and Stylistics at the university now known as Kyiv National Linguistic University (1971), left behind a substantial scholarly legacy that underlie modern research into stylistic issues of the English language in Ukraine. Among others, the professor devoted special attention to the problem of the *text:discourse* dichotomy in the aspects of their definition and interaction (Морочовський, 2011, cc. 324–374). Developing Morochovsky's scholarly legacy in the context of geopolitical changes, namely during the period of authoritarian regimes strengthening in many countries around the globe including Russia, Belarus, Iran, North Korea, etc., this article examines how authoritarian discourse influences the process of poetic text creation and affects its emotiveness in particular.

Analysis of recent research and publications. The problem of poetic text existence in authoritarian discourse is not new. It has been studied in English, German, Ukrainian, Russian and other languages in the three main aspects with regard to the social role of the addresser in a poetic text: (i) the addresser is a dictator in his country (for example, Hamid Ismailov examines the poetic "experiments" of Joseph Stalin, Adolf Hitler, Yuri Andropov, Mao Zedong, etc.) (Ismailov, 2012); (ii) the addresser conforms to the authoritarian regime and his poetic texts are designed to strengthen existing dogma (among the poets, we can mention a) those who expressed anti-democratic views – Ezra Pound (Ferkiss, 1955), and b) those whose work underwent ideological changes under the influence of repressive political circumstances – Pavlo Tychyna (Байдюк, 2021), Ivan Drach and other poets in the Ukrainian poetic tradition); (iii) the addresser resists the existing regime (Ko Un, Liu Xia, Simin Behbahani, etc.) and poetically manifests struggle for freedom or justice in oppressive political / military conditions, revealing a range of emotional experiences.

Research aim and objectives. The article aims at disclosing emotive strategies engaged in poetic texts formation within the authoritarian discourse. The achieving of the above-mentioned aim embraces the following objectives: (1) outlining the segment of poetic texts that feature the authoritarian pressure in the English discourse; (2) defining the notion of "emotive strategy"; (3) making up a typology of emotive strategies in English poetic texts written within authoritarian regimes; 4) discerning the dominant images of emotions in the analyzed poetic texts.

Research methods and methodology. The research methods employed in the article are (1) the method of cognitive analysis, (2) the methods of stylistic analysis and text interpretation, (3) the method of discourse analysis.

Discussion of the main research findings. *Authoritarian discourse* is defined as a form of communication which aims at asserting power (Василенко, 2019), controlling information, and imposing a certain interpretation of reality on the recipient (Goldschläger, 1982, p. 11). It is often used in political, ideological, social contexts to support the dominant power (*ibid.*) and suppress alternative points of view (Крючкова, 2003). The main characteristics of authoritarian discourse are hierarchy; unambiguousness; monologue character / one-way talk; manipulativeness / despotism (involves the use of rhetorical

techniques to form appropriate attitudes in the recipient, i.e., emotional pressure or fear in particular); censorship and control of information; dichotomous thinking (forcing the perception of the world through the lens of the polar concepts like RIGHT / WRONG, OWN / ALIEN, FRIENDS / ENEMIES) (e.g., Bedesky, R.). Authoritarian discourse is produced by the dominant communicant of an asymmetrical pair of speakers and is characterized by a certain repertoire of speech reinforcement strategies, including a specific set of codes and styles, communication channels, specific authoritarian speech acts, and discursive markers of authoritarianism (Василенко, 2019).

Paradoxically, such a discourse can be implemented not only in the genres of political propaganda, official statements, and ideological texts, but also in poetry (see Ismailov, 2012). The functions of the poetic text within authoritarian discourse are versatile. Since this type of discourse is asymmetric in its nature with the voice of the stronger communicant (the one who is in power) hushing the voice of the weaker, the poetic text is used as a vehicle of various senses ranging from self-assertion in power and regime glorification to regime resentment. It is exploited as a manipulative tool to heighten the authority of the leader of the state, to strengthen propagandistic ideas, or to declare the injustice in the society. The discursive aim of the poem goes in line with its emotive strategy, as the poetic text communicates not only conceptual, but also emotional information (Tsur, 2002, p. 282).

The emotional information may represent difficulties in identifying by the recipient. It is encoded in a poetic text in the form of *emotives* which are defined as linguistic units that mark the emotional impressions, feelings, or internal states experienced by the author. Depending on the way of encoding emotional information in the poetic text, emotives fall into three types: nominatives, expressives, and descriptives (Редька, 2020, c. 154). *Nominative emotives* name the emotions directly, for example, *rage*, *anger*, *fear*, etc. *Expressive emotives* render emotional experience through image-bearing units also known as rhetorical figures or figures of speech which possess a very strong connotative power (for example, the metaphor in the following example captures the dynamism of the frenzy showing its escalation to its peak: “*And the fire of its rage / Turns upon its obsession*” – Alyssa Underwood). *Descriptive emotives* communicate inner feelings of the author through the networks of stylistic devices that suggest specific emotions like *fear* which results from the discursive act of jeopardizing in the following example: “*Blossoms are opening on every branch, / exposing happiness in their hearts: / such colourful exhibitions must be stopped*” – “It’s time to mow the flowers” by Simin Behbahani. The three types of emotive units serve as “textual triggers” of emotions in the recipient (Knaller, 2017, pp. 17–18; Tsur, 2002, p. 284;).

A set of emotives forms the *emotiveness* of the poetic text, which is defined as a linguistically expressed, conceptually and pragmatically conditioned system of text signals of various emotions, reflecting the author’s intention. Thus, the pragmatic component of emotiveness in the poetic text is viewed upon as its emotive (= affective) strategy. *Emotive strategies* are the conscious emotional appeals manifested in poetic texts via networks of expressive means and stylistic devices that trigger and guide emotional responses in recipients like *admiration*, *loyalty*, *fear*, or *resentment* to serve ideological purposes. The emotive strategy reflects the shift from one emotional state of the addresser to the other. With regard to this, it is necessary to differentiate between primary and secondary images of emotions. The primary image of emotion represents the inner feeling that serves as a starting point or a stimulus to the target or purposeful emotion in the poetic text, i.e. the secondary image of emotion. For example, the image of the primary emotion of fear may be superseded by resentment (the image of the secondary emotion) in the process of the text development.

Within authoritarian regimes, which impose constraints on self-determination, the discursive strategies employed in poetic texts may range from despotic to rebellious. These strategies may include (1) glorification, (2) humiliation, (3) idealization, (4) liberation, (5) victimization, among others. Such discursive patterns are often reinforced by emotive strategies aimed at eliciting specific emotional responses in recipients, with predominant emotions including fear, humiliation, and hope (Myazi, 2018, c. 31). These emotions are collective in nature and are typically experienced by large social groups.

The English poetic discourse is characterized by freedom of expression and democratic values. Consequently, poets face few constraints in articulating their views and feelings. Although they frequently address themes of violence and social injustice (for example, Carol Ann Duffy (Scotland) in her “The Dictator” and “Politics” criticizes authoritarian tendencies; Seamus Heaney (Northern Ireland) in many poems explores violence, control, and political oppression (see “Station Island”); Tony Harrison (England) in his poetry (for example, “V”) criticizes authoritarian figures and state violence; Ben Okri (Nigerian British) touches upon authoritarianism, corruption, and freedom), their works are not subject to censorship. The influence of authoritarian discourse in English poetry is primarily reflected in the texts written by poets who have fled social oppression or political and military regimes, and whose works have subsequently been translated into English. Within the native English poetic tradition, however, there are relatively few authors who have personally experienced life under authoritarian conditions. Thus, we can refer to the translated poetic texts of authors who worked under censorship or authoritarian pressure (outside the United Kingdom / the United States of America), for example, Ko Un (Korea), dissident poets from China, Iran, Belarus (Liu Xia, Simin Behbahani, Maryja Martysevic).

Let us try to develop a concise yet balanced understanding of the emotive strategies that shape dominant – and thus purposeful or ideologically desired – emotional images in poetic texts written under the authoritarian regimes.

The writer is a dictator. The so-called “poems” written by dictators often contain the concept of power strengthening or expansion of influence, which naturally puts down the value of democracy and humiliates people. The deployment of emotive humiliation can be traced in the lines of the poetic text written by former KGB chief Yuri Andropov (1914–1984) (Ismailov, 2012):

*Once a villain blurted out,
that power corrupts people.
Now all pundits repeat it for so many years
Without noticing (alas!),
That more often people corrupt the power.*

The stylistic device of chiasmus used in this example refocuses understanding of the concept of power: “[it is not] power that corrupts people, but people corrupt power”. The unexpected U-turn captures the abrupt devaluation of the human personality and, in combination with the negatively connoted word “villain”, objectifies the contemptuous attitude of the ruling elite towards freedom of thought, promoting instead the cult of power. Within the poetic text under analysis, the emotive strategy obviously captures the move from the implied emotive of anger (marked by the unflattering expression “*Once a villain blurted out*”) to the purposeful emotive complex of guilt and humiliation (E_1 Anger → E_2 Guilt/Humiliation). Thus, the discursive strategy of power-glorification is reinforced by the emotive strategy of humiliation.

The authoritarian context can also be the object of glorification and critique. Interestingly, one of the frequent techniques that appear in the analyzed texts is a corporeal language or

“corporeal analogies” (Salavastru, 2016) that acquire symbolic traits and give the recipient a valuable insight into the emotive side of the poem.

The writer is an official poet. The segment of the poetic texts in which authors glorify existing regimes is mainly propagandistic in their nature and represents a very little poetic value if any at all. Thus, they are rarely translated into the English language and seldom enter the English poetic discourse. The organization of the imagery of such poetic texts may represent the epistemological interest though. For this reason, we will refer to the ChatGPT-generated translation of the poem written by Ivan Drach (1936–2018) (doubtfully, that it is known outside the Ukrainian context) (Драч, 2009):

[...]
*The homeland breathes, her eyebrows wide and stern,
A donor to the planet, blood aflame.
My ripeness breathes where distant starlights burn,
In lands of sugar and of crystal grain.*

*Faith is in labour – all else fades away.
I breathe with Lenin, to my final breath*
[...]

In the poetic text, the theme of worshipping the Soviet-era ideology is metaphorically rendered through the bodily process of breathing. Thus, the soviet ideology is framed as the vital substance that the poet extatically inhales. The poetic text clearly demonstrates the presence of the complex image of false emotions of reverence and awe. According to T. Milligan, false emotion is “the strategically fabricated feeling to mask the real feeling or mood” (2008). False emotion is viewed upon as a construal characterized by excessive drama, lack of depth, real stimulus and corresponding affective reaction, as well as the presence of corresponding motives for its construction (ibid., pp. 215–225). The image of the false emotion acquires more and more emphasis as the analyzed text develops until it reaches its peak. Verbally it is marked by the ideological allusion (*Lenin*). The false emotion of ideological inspiration masks the true emotion (= “raw” feeling that arises from the real experience, circumstance, or internal state) of a fear of being persecuted for the otherness in opinion. This image of emotion stays behind the physical limits of the poem and only the historical background allows its reconstruction. In the oppressive political context, authors are often guided by the duty to create their texts in line with well-established ideology. Thus, LIVING TO IDEOLOGY IS BREATHING is the central metaphor of the analyzed text. So, the primary (true) emotion of fear (conscious or subconscious) gives an impetus for the construction of the secondary (false) emotion namely the conformity complex of reverence and awe (E_1 true: Fear $\rightarrow E_2$ false: Ideological Reverence/Awe).

The writer is a dissident poet. The third group of texts that expose the resentment to the existing power is the most numerous as it exposes genuine humanistic values. To illustrate the case, we will refer to the poetic texts written by Ko Un (1933, the Korean poet, who after witnessing the atrocities of the Korean war, became the Buddhist monk and after leaving the Buddhist community, was imprisoned for several times for his opposition to the military regime) (Ko Un 1) and Simin Behbahani (1927–2014, the prominent Iranian contemporary poet and activist, also known as “the lioness of Iran”, she wrote outspoken poems under the shadow of Iranian censorship) (Simin Behbahani, 2014).

Unlike the previous texts that have been analyzed, the following poems meet all the requirements set to the category of poeticality of poetic texts: they possess striking aesthetic imagery and deep philosophical meaning.

Let us first consider the poetic text, written by Ko Un (Ko Un 2):

*The eyes of that woman
who for half a day of flower-rain
trod on falling petals,
petals covering the ground.
The eyes of that pregnant woman.
Some three years later,
the eyes of that newborn baby,
eyes that do not know
a swallow is a swallow.
The eyes of a young man shining at night
before the light was turned off,
eyes of a revolution
doomed to fail.
The eyes of an old man
looking back at his home
one last time
as he heads for hospital
or nursing home,
the home he once left
and couldn't go back to
on the banks of the Cheongcheon River in North Korea,
the eyes of that old man where the source of tears has dried up.
We all have lived
together with those eyes,
lived then left.*

The poem examines the multitude of individual perspectives, but at the same time features the emotive resonance of people who have the same collective trauma. While some images are simplistic and reflect common sensory experiences, they acquire a deeper symbolic meaning. The “eyes” that capture these images (*the eyes of that woman; the eyes of that newborn baby; the eyes of a young man shining at night, eyes of a revolution / doomed to fail; The eyes of an old man / looking back at his home / one last time as he heads for hospital / or nursing home*) are crucial for the collective memory, representing life’s core elements: hope, innocence, disillusionment, and a painful nostalgia that verges on despair. The *mise en abyme* technique, suggested by the EYES ARE MIRROR metaphor (*We all have lived / together with those eyes*), expands the network of images to infinity, underscoring the importance of shared experience.

The text also includes historical allusion that highlights the collective trauma of the Korean people (the battle on the banks of *Cheongcheon River*, 1950–51). The pronoun “we” signifies group memory and simultaneously implies social polarization.

This post-traumatic experience and the author’s empathy are projected onto the visual imagery. The repetitive, anaphoric use of the word “eyes” intensifies this concept and strengthens the notion of a collective identity. The text’s fleeting, reflective images reinforce the **river** archetype, creating an overall serene tone. Thus, in this poetic text, the image of the primary emotion of despair gives an impetus to the development of the secondary purposeful image of emotion of alienated solidarity (E_1 Despair→ E_2 Alienated Solidarity).

Simin Behbahani’s poem “My country, I will build you again” (Behbahani) thematizes the struggle for freedom through the extended metaphor of rebuilding the Iranian nation.

*My country, I will build you again,
if need be, with bricks made from my life.
I will build columns to support your roof,
if need be, with my bones.
I will inhale again the perfume of flowers
favored by your youth.
I will wash again the blood off your body
with torrents of my tears.
Once more, the darkness will leave this house.
I will paint my poems blue with the color of our sky.
The resurrector of “old bones” will grant me in his bounty
a mountain’s splendor in his testing grounds.
Old I may be, but given the chance, I will learn.
I will begin a second youth alongside my progeny.
I will recite the Hadith of “love and country”
with such fervor as to make each word bear life.
There still burns a fire in my breast
to keep undiminished the warmth of kinship
I feel for my people.
Once more you will grant me strength,
though my poems have settled in blood.
Once more I will build you with my life,
though it be beyond my means.*

The lyric persona sacrifices parts of her body – specifically her bones (*I will build columns to support your roof, / if need be, with my bones*) – to serve as the foundation, a potent symbol of self-sacrifice for the country’s sake. The parallel construction (*Once more you will grant me strength, / though my poems have settled in blood. / Once more I will build you with my life, / though it be beyond my means*) intensifies a central emotive of hope, bordering on obsession. This emotional intensity, combined with the strategic repetition of self-sacrificial images and tactile references (*There still burns a fire in my breast / to keep undiminished the warmth of kinship / I feel for my people*), reinforces the collective identity. Furthermore, the poem undergoes a discursive shift from a singular “I” to a collective “we” signifying the transition from individual commitment to a shared effort necessary for restoring a traumatized national identity. This process of collective rebirth is underscored by the theme of resurrection. The poem’s building blocks consist of both cherished elements (*colour of sky, scent of youth*) and the stark reality of sacrifice (mentioned above), demonstrating a comprehensive commitment to national restoration. So, through its emotive strategy, the poem demonstrates a transition from the primary emotion of resentment, incited by political oppression, to a secondary and purposeful emotion of hope (E₁Resentment→E₂Hope). The offered above analysis goes in line with the well-known quote by Simin Behbahani: “We [writers] will be truly honoured the day when no writer is in jail, no student is under arrest, when journalists are free and their pens are free” (Simin Behbahani, 2014).

Conclusions and prospects for further research. This article examines the representation of injustice within English poetic discourse, specifically focusing on texts written under authoritarian regimes. Poetic texts from authoritarian contexts outside of the United Kingdom and United States are relatively rare and reveal distinct features of censorship. These texts convey not only logical information, but also powerful emotional (or affective) messages through specific emotive strategies. For the purpose of this analysis,

an emotive strategy is defined as the conscious manipulation of emotional appeal in poetic texts, accomplished through a network of expressive means and stylistic devices. These strategies aim to trigger and guide specific emotional responses in the audience to serve ideological purposes.

The study analyses emotive strategies in poems by a dictator, an official poet and dissident poets. The findings reveal a shift from a primary, or initial, emotion to a more purposeful, or secondary, one. The analysis indicates a notable progression in emotive strategy across different authorial roles: a move from anger toward humiliation in the text by the dictator Andropov; a shift from the implied emotion of fear to the fabricated emotion of ideological reverence or awe in the text by the official poet Drach; and a transformation from despair and resentment toward hope and solidarity in the texts by the dissident writers Un and Behbahani.

Future research could further explore the emotiveness of poetic texts produced under specific authoritarian regimes.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

Use of Artificial Intelligence

Artificial intelligence tools (ChatGPT) were used in the preparation of the manuscript exclusively for the purpose of translating into English the poetic text of the Ukrainian-language poet I. Drach (as the absence of such material constitutes a research gap), as well as for formatting the reference list and citations. No artificial intelligence tools were used for data analysis, interpretation of results, or generation of original research content.

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