MEANS OF EVALUATING THE AUTHOR AND CHARACTER’S SPEECH
(CASE STUDY OF THE LITERARY BIOGRAPHY
BY W. ISAACSON “STEVE JOBS: BIOGRAPHY”)

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Key words: literary biography, evaluation, means of evaluation, logical evaluation, emotional evaluation, negative evaluation, positive evaluation, individual subject of evaluation, lexical level, syntactic level.

In the paper, attention is focused on the means of expressing linguistic evaluation of the author and character’s speech. The critical and analytical review of scientific literature proves that one of the peculiarities of biographical texts is the profound concentration on the figure’s inner world. It has been established that the axiological activity of the author of the text is carried out with the help of two types of evaluation: logical (rational) and emotional (irrational). It has been proved and illustrated that the evaluation of knowledge about a phenomenon, a subject or a person can be positive and negative. Among the ways of expressing the evaluated subject, the author of the paper singles out the individual subject of evaluation, when the latter is provided by a certain person.

The case study is the literary biography of W. Isaacson “Steve Jobs: Biography”. It has been found out that in this literary biography both the narrator of the text and the protagonist, Steve Jobs, act as individual subjects of evaluation as we observe both his own evaluation and the one given by the author. The position of the latter is realized in the text in the following ways: by direct reference to the people who surrounded Steve Jobs and influenced his development; through personal pronouns and word combinations with them; usage of parenthesis and parenthetical phrases. The individual subject of the evaluation of the protagonist is reflected in the literary autobiography with the help of personal pronouns, words and phrases denoting a certain group of people, etc.

According to the results of the semantic analysis, a number of lexical units conveying the evaluation of the author as well as the protagonist’s speech have been revealed. The nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, and phraseological units have been singled out. At the syntactic level, we observe the following means of evaluation: comparative, parallel and attributive constructions, parenthesis, and detached clauses as well.
ЗАСОБИ ВИРАЖЕННЯ МОВНОЇ ОЦІНКИ АВТОРСЬКОГО ТА ПЕРСОНАЖНОГО МОВЛЕННЯ (НА МАТЕРІАЛІ ЛІТЕРАТУРНОЇ БІОГРАФІЇ У. АЙЗЕКСОНА “STEVE JOBS: BIOGRAPHY”)

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У статті увагу сконцентровано на засобах вираження мовної оцінки авторського та персонажного мовлення. Критико-аналітичний огляд наукової літератури доводить, що однією з особливостей біографічних текстів є глибока зосередженість на внутрішньому світі відомої особистості.

Встановлено, що аксіологічна діяльність автора тексту здійснюється за допомогою двох видів оцінки: логічної (раціональної) та емоційної (ірраціональної). Доведено та проілюстровано, що оцінювання знання про явище, предмет чи особистість може бути позитивним і негативним.

Серед способів вираження оцінного суб’єкта авторка статті виокремлює індивідуальний суб’єкт оцінки, коли оцінка надається однією певною особою.

Матеріалом дослідження слугує робота У. Айзексона «Стів Джобс: біографія». З’ясовано, що в цій літературній біографії індивідуальним суб’єктом оцінки є як нарато́р тексту, так і протагоніст – Стів Джобс, адже спостерігаємо як його власну оцінку, так і оцінку, надану автором. Позиція останнього реалізується в тексті в такий спосіб: прямою вказівкою на людей, які оточували Стіва Джобса і вплинули на його розвиток; через особові займенники та словосполучення з ними; шляхом використання вставних слів і словосполучень. Індивідуальний суб’єкт оцінки протагоніста відображений у літературній автобіографії за допомогою особових займенників, слів і словосполучень на позначення певної групи людей тощо.

За результатами семантичного аналізу виявлено низку лексичних одиниць, які передають оцінку авторського мовлення та мовлення головного персонажа. Серед них викріплені іменники, дієслова, прикметники та дієприкметники, фразеологічні словосполучення. На синтаксичному рівні спостерігаємо такі засоби відображення оцінки, як порівняння, паралельні, атрибутивні конструкції, вставні слова, а також відокремлені члени речення.

Ключові слова: літературна біографія, оцінка, засоби оцінки, логічна оцінка, емоційна оцінка, позитивна оцінка, позитивна оцінка, індивідуальний суб’єкт оцінки, лексичний рівень, синтаксичний рівень.

**Problem statement.** The problem of biographical texts has received substantial interest within modern humanitarian sciences outlining numerous aspects of their investigation. The description of the literary biography, in addition to the dimension of the biography of the writer, also appears as the biography of a famous historical figure. Such a description is based on documentary facts as well as the ones of the epoch the person lived. One of the peculiarities of biographical texts is the profound concentration on the figure’s inner world [1, p. 61]. The core classifications of the literary biography, its varieties and attributive features of its genre model have already been described in detail [1, p. 61].

Moreover, a few studies of our own have focused on the issue in our previous papers, where one can find making the first move to study the question [2–5]. Thus, “it has been clarified that in the literary biography «Steve Jobs: Biography» the essence of the narrator as a moderator of the author’s intention is reflected in the author’s digressions of a philosophical, journalistic and historical nature. In the digressions of a philosophical nature, we observe both the first-person and the third-person form of narration,
while in the journalistic and historical digressions of the author, the third-person form of presentation prevails” [5, p. 41]. It has been stated that the text of the literary biography “Steve Jobs: Biography” “contains features of artistic and autobiographical types of discourses, although the productive communicative style of speech remains priority. The latter is based on “attitude towards the other person as a value” [4, p. 22]. We have concluded the text of the literary biography “is characterized by a gradual and slow depiction of data from the real life of a specific figure, an arbitrary way of presenting the material, a combination of elements of two styles (artistic and official), awareness of the picture of the past life of the object of the literary biography” [2, p. 79]. In particular, we have mentioned that “that the category of time in the literary biography is realized in several temporal dimensions – objective, subjective, biographical and real ones” [3, p. 129].

After defining the problem, we explain the goals of the paper. As far as we know, no previous research has investigated the matter of linguistic means of evaluating the author and character’s speech in literary biographies. In this paper we propose to surmount this problem by analyzing two types of evaluating: logical (rational) and emotional (irrational). Moreover, we focus our attention on individual subject of evaluating, when the latter is provided by a certain person.

Thus, the object of this paper is the text of the literary biography “Steve Jobs: Biography”.

The subject is means of evaluating the author and character’s speech on lexical and syntactic levels accordingly.

Results and discussion. We must admit, first of all, that the concept of evaluation as a basic mental operation, without which it is impossible to imagine the existence of a person and which is embodied in verbal and non-verbal signs [6], has always been in scholars’ focus of attention. Nowadays, in scientific circles, “the concept of «evaluation» has become an integral part of the conceptual apparatus of modern linguistics, which clearly demonstrates the fact that it is impossible to examine a language without resorting to its primary purpose, its «creator», carrier, user, specific linguistic personality, a person” [7, p. 68].

Evaluation is considered to be one of the types of modalities that are superimposed on the descriptive content of a linguistic statement. Utterances involving evaluation or other modalities contain a descriptive and a non-descriptive (modal) component, with the former describing one or more possible states of affairs, and the latter expressing something about them. So, for example, one can express approval or disapproval of the state of affairs, qualify its implementation as physically impossible, claim that it takes place, etc. In other terms, the evaluative modality is determined by the statement as a whole, and not by its individual elements, and is a component of the statement.

It is known that verbal communication usually has a manifestation in a specific situation or context. The latter appears as an internal property of communication. Accordingly, the functioning of evaluative expressions is significant as the evaluation of various episodes of life is a constituent of human cognitive activity [7, p. 65; 8, p. 67].

I. Kozubska states that “evaluation regulates the assimilation, systematization and transformation of existing knowledge; it stimulates the proposal of new ideas and the search for new scientific results; it motivates the program of specific research. Moreover, it accompanies knowledge along the entire path of its emergence, development and crystallization in the text” [9, p. 100].

As evidenced by the results of the critical analysis of scientific sources, the axiological activity of the author of the text is carried out with the help of two types of evaluation – logical (rational) and emotional (irrational) [8]. The rational evaluation reflects the author’s intellectual attitude to new and old knowledge in terms of its randomness or non-compliance with a certain standard, norms and requirements. The irrational sphere of consciousness is considered to be the emotional evaluation, which is contained in various shades of approval / disapproval, satisfaction / dissatisfaction, admiration, surprise, irritation, condemnation and other emotional stimuli and the author’s reactions [10, p. 18].

The logical (rational) and emotional (irrational) evaluations often interact in the text. The first one is motivated by objective thoughts, whereas the second one is motivated by the subject’s feelings about the object (person, phenomenon, event, etc.). The words and expressions with positive and negative semantics from the intellectual sphere of linguistic thinking as well as emotionally expressive, connoted linguistic means are the units of the logical evaluation. For example, after analyzing Steve Jobs’ biography, which is written by the American journalist and biographer, Walter Isaacson, we have found the examples of both logical and emotional evaluations: “I always thought of myself as a humanities person as a kid, but I liked electronics,” he said. “Then I read something that one of my heroes, Edwin Land of Polaroid, said about the importance of people who could stand at the intersection of humanities and sciences, and I decided that’s what I wanted to do” [11, p. 12]. In the given example, rationality is conveyed through the modal verb could and verbs with a modal meaning – decide and want.

Let’s analyze one more illustration: “His only involvement came when my publisher was choosing the cover art. When he saw an early version of a proposed cover treatment, he disliked it so much
that he asked to have input in designing a new version. I was both amused and willing, so I readily assented” [11, p. 12]. Here we see verbs conveying the meaning of dislike (disliked), pleasure (amused), desire to act (willing), and approval (assented).

The number of emotional evaluations correlates, on the one hand, with the narrator’s emotional attitude towards the reported information as well as his desire to influence the reader with the power of feeling as such an opinion is better reassuring.

Evaluation of knowledge about a phenomenon, a subject or a person can be positive or negative. Let’s illustrate our thought: “Knowing I was adopted may have made me feel more independent, but I have never felt abandoned. I’ve always felt special. My parents made me feel special” [11, p. 25]. This is how Steve Jobs reflects on his adoption by Paul Jobs and his wife, Clara. The use of the contrasting adverbs never and always in two sentences that are used in Steve’s direct speech and are sequentially dependent on each other strengthens and emphasizes the strength of the protagonist’s spirit, who considers himself special and more independent precisely because of special treatment from their non-biological parents.

Another example of positive evaluation is demonstrated by the fragment from the text, when Steve found a photo of his parents: “He’s in the engine room, and he’s got his shirt off and looks like James Dean. It was one of those Oh wow moments for a kid. Wow, oohh, my parents were actually once very young and really good-looking” [11, p. 26]. Here, the protagonist recalls his childhood impressions of his parents’ appearance, using positive semantic adjectives (young, good-looking) and adverbs-intensifiers (actually, very, really).

After Steve had comprehended that the head-phones didn’t need electronic amplifiers (and his father insisted otherwise), he realized that his father wasn’t as smart as the boy thought. It was then that the boy thought that he was smarter than his father, although he became saddened by this fact later. Moreover, Steve equated the event of his adoption with his personal alienation from his family and the world: “When I realized that I was smarter than my parents, I felt tremendous shame for having thought that. I will never forget that moment.” This discovery, he later told friends, along with the fact that he was adopted, made him feel apart – detached and separate – from both his family and the world” [11, p. 30].

Among the ways of expressing the evaluated subject, there is “an individual subject of evaluation, when the latter is provided by a certain person” [9, p. 101]. In the literary biography of Steve Jobs, both the narrator of the text and the protagonist act as individual subjects of evaluation as we observe both Steve’s own evaluation and the evaluative attitude of Walter Isaacson.

The position of the latter is realized in the text in the following ways: by direct reference to the people who surrounded Steve and influenced his development (“Even before Jobs started elementary school, his mother had taught him how to read”) [11, p. 31]; through personal pronouns and word combinations with them (“As Jobs showed it off to me, he caressed the stockade panels and recalled a lesson that his father implanted deeply in him”) [11, p. 26]; usage of parenthesis and parenthetical phrases (“Fortunately there was a place nearby for entrepreneurs who had outgrown their garages” [11, p. 28]).

The individual subject of S. Jobs’ evaluation is reflected in the literary biography by means of the following: with the help of personal pronouns I and my, myself (“I was kind of bored for the first few years, so I occupied myself by getting into trouble”) [11, p. 31]; words and phrases to denote a certain group of people, for example, S. Jobs’ classmates and teachers; these groups are expressed in the text through a personal pronoun we (“One time we set off on an explosive under the chair of our teacher, Mrs. Thurman. We gave her a nervous twitch”); “The teacher for the advanced class was a spunky woman named Imogene Hill, known as “Teddy,” and she became, Jobs said, “one of the saints of my life.” After watching him for a couple of weeks, she figured that the best way to handle him was to bribe him. “After school one day, she gave me this workbook with math problems in it, and she said, ‘I want you to take it home and do this.’ And I thought, ‘Are you nuts?’ And then she pulled out one of these giant lollipops that seemed as big as the world. And she said, ‘When you’re done with it, if you get it mostly right, I will give you this and five dollars.’ And I handed it back within two days.” After a few months, he no longer required the bribes. “I just wanted to learn and to please her”) [11, p. 31].

The results of the semantic analysis let us highlight a number of lexical units conveying the evaluation of the author’s speech as well as the one of the main character. Among them we single out:

- nouns: challenge, ultimatum, attribute, experiences, satisfaction: “My dad helped me buy and inspect it. The satisfaction of getting paid and saving up for something, that was very exciting” [11, p. 36];
- verbs: insist, resist, teach, to make smb do smth, to be interested in: “I was interested in math and science and electronics. They were too, and also into LSD and the whole counterculture trip” [11, p. 34];
- adjectives and participles: special, challenged, stimulated, bullied, significant, spiritual, uncool, great: “But at the time it was the most uncool car in the world. Still, it was a car, so that was great” [11, p. 36];
- phraseological units: put nuts and bolts on things, make ends meet (“His parents were barely making ends meet, but by this point there was little doubt that they would eventually bend to his
will”) [11, p. 32]; fall in love with smth (“I saw my first desktop computer there. It was called the 9100A, and it was a glorified calculator but also really the first desktop computer: It was huge, maybe forty pounds, but it was a beauty of a thing. I fell in love with it”) [11, p. 35].

At the syntactic level, we observe the following means of displaying the evaluation:

1) comparative constructions: “It was as if something in the animal’s body and in its brain had been engineered to work together instantly rather than being learned” [11, p. 34];

2) parallel constructions: “He had begun his lifelong experiments with compulsive diets, eating only fruits and vegetables, so he was as lean and tight as a whippet. He learned to stare at people without blinking, and he performed long silences punctuated by staccato bursts of fast talking” [11, p. 47];

3) attributive constructions: “I wanted to be like an orphan who had bummed around the country on trains and just arrived out of nowhere, with no roots, no connections, no background” [11, p. 49];

4) parenthesis, with the help of which one can see contrastive connotations of the evaluation: “His intensity, however, made it difficult for him to achieve inner peace; his Zen awareness was not accompanied by an excess of calm, peace of mind, or interpersonal mellowness” [11, p. 50];

5) detached clauses: “Vegetarianism and Zen Buddhism, meditation and spirituality, acid and rock – Jobs rolled together, in an amped-up way, the multiple impulses that were hallmarks of the enlightenment-seeking campus subculture of the era” [11, p. 51].

Conclusions. Thus, evaluation is a category peculiar to the text of the literary biography, the main function of which is argumentation, explanation and generalization. Evaluation of knowledge about a phenomenon, a subject or a person can be positive or negative. The axiological activity of the narrator of the text is carried out with the help of two types of evaluation: logical (rational) and emotional (irrational). Among the ways of expressing the evaluated subject, attention is focused on the shifting of the linguistic form (case study of its typology and stylistic features). Вісник Житомирського державного університету імені Івана Франка. Серія «Філологічні науки». 2022. Вип. 3(98). С. 79–89. DOI: 10.35433/philology.3(98).2022.79-89.


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