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THE MANIFESTATION OF SOPHIE KINSELLA'S CONCEPTUAL PROFILE IN THE POST-FEMININE ERA

Research article

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Abstract

This study strives to illuminate multiple peculiarities of the works of the British author Madeleine Wickham, widely known as Sophie Kinsella. Subsequently, the idea of the writer's conceptual profile is elaborated. Based on a scrutinised analysis of the author's various novels and the interpretation of the phenomenon of post-feminism and the role of the Chick Lit genre in the author's artistic endeavour, the identification of two conceptual systems of Sophie Kinsella was deduced. Albeit the general study of the works of the particular British writer, significant characteristics remain neglected. Hence, the most valuable contribution of this article is the development of an extensive author's conceptual system that, additionally, stimulates the amelioration of comprehension of Sophie Kinsella's novels and her overall worldview. Furthermore, the findings can be implemented into such academic courses as sociolinguistics, semiotics and cognitive linguistics.

Keywords: S. Kinsella, M. Wickham, conceptual profile, post-feminism, chick lit.

РЕПРЕЗЕНТАЦИЯ КОНЦЕПТУАЛЬНОГО ПРОФИЛЯ С. КИНСЕЛЛЫ В ЭПОХУ ПОСТФЕМИНИЗМА

Научная статья

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Аннотация

Цель настоящего исследования заключается в том, чтобы осветить многочисленные лингвистические особенности творчества британской писательницы М. Уикхем, широко известной как С. Кинселла, а также разработать концептуальный профиль представленного автора. На основе тщательного анализа различных романов писательницы, а также исследования роли постфеминизма и жанра «чиклит» в творческой вселенной автора, были выявлены две концептуальные системы С. Кинселлы. Несмотря на общую изученность творчества британской писательницы, немаловажные авторские индивидуальные особенности остались без внимания. Следовательно, ценность данной статьи состоит в детальном исследовании авторской концептуальной системы на основе выявления идиостилевых особенностей с целью построения концептуального профиля писательницы, что способствует улучшению понимания романов С. Кинселлы и ее мировоззрения в целом. Более того, полученные результаты исследования могут быть внедрены в чтение академических курсов по социолингвистике, семиотике и когнитивной лингвистике.

Ключевые слова: С. Кинселла, М. Уикхем, концептуальный профиль, постфеминизм, чиклит.

Introduction

Each writer has an individual literary world in which their true personality is revealed through the lens of language of narration. According to the Russian philologist M. Yu. Mukhin, the analysis of the author's frequent lexicon and further semantic classification makes it possible to fully comprehend the author's conceptual systems [9]. M. Yu. Mukhin believes that each author's work can be characterized as an individual and characteristic set of "denotative classes". This set is represented in the text and personifies the way the author perceives the world [10, P. 16]. Thus, it can be denoted as the writer's conceptual profile.

This study aims at elaborating on the conceptual profile of the British author Sophie Kinsella and illuminating how the author's thinking and individual style of writing influence the 'formation' of the writer in the contemporary linguistic world. The works of British author Sophie Kinsella have been chosen due to the fact that she is a distinctive example of a writer who creates in the post-feminist era, and is 'the voice of modernity'. It is a widely known fact that androcentrism is a dominant feature of the language system in today's society. The representatives of the feminist movement do not accept such gender imbalances and marginalization of femininity in language. As we all know, feminist views have long been evident in the literary sphere. However, it is worth specifying that the feminism has several movements; there is a division of the feminism into different waves. And, perhaps, traditional feminism can be too strict with regard to the male component of society. In this respect, a new and more peaceful movement exists, which is called post-feminism. This phenomenon is yielded in the current study. Post-feminism is an alternative acceptance and mindful perception of femininity.

Sophie Kinsella writes in the Chick Lit genre, which encapsulates the characteristics of post-feminist ideas [1]. Philologist Y. G. Remaeva believes that literature written in this genre fully transmits the range of problems of the post-feminist era [12, P. 11]. Chick Lit is written by women authors about contemporary women and for representatives of feminine gender identity. In such novels, the main character is always a strong and independent woman who accepts her feminine nature and does not deny it. At the same time, she does not forget about gender equality [7]. It should be noted that it is the choice of a particular

narrative genre that shapes the author's ideology. Hence, it is worth stating that Sophie Kinsella embodies a particular rebellious spirit due to the fact that she fights for women's rights through her literary works.

Research methods and principles

In order to examine and specify the conceptual profile of Sophie Kinsella, several works such as *My Not So Perfect Life* (2017), *Can You Keep a Secret?* (2003) and *I've Got Your Number* (2011) were fully analysed. The main conceptual features were identified and further classified through detailed analysis of the novels.

Thus, this study has proved that the phenomenon of first-person narrative can be observed in all of Kinsella's works. This allows the reader to identify themselves with the main character, thereby creating an effect of real presence and immersion into the novel. For example, the occurrence of rhetorical questions as a syntactic technique can be traced throughout many novels of the writer: "Did I fabricate that spark between us?" [5, P. 51]. In addition to the first-person narrative, there is also an interpersonal interaction with the readers through the use of certain linguistic inclusions, such as introductory words ("And, listen, before I say it, it doesn't sound glamorous, OK? But it's not as bad as it sounds, really" [5, P. 16]; "Imagine having...;" [5, P. 13]). Consequently, it shortens the distance between the author and the reader. You have the opportunity to identify yourself with the protagonist and with particular relatable situations.

The usage of parentheses is evident throughout the novels, particularly ironic ones ("(Note to self: Do not laugh in the vicinity of Demeter. Demeter never laughs. Can Demeter laugh?)" [5, P. 36]; "(I have no idea what that has to do with Christmas.)" [5, P. 68]). A combination of irony, humor and wit prevails in Kinsella's literary works. Such linguistic devices do not possess any negative connotations, but rather good-natured humour instead of sarcastic insulting mockery.

It is essential to highlight the fact that Sophie Kinsella shows a preference for the usage of parentheses, nonetheless, for instance, in the book *I've Got Your Number* (2011) besides the usage of parentheses we can also witness footnotes, which frequently appear throughout the novel. At the beginning of the book, reading such footnotes might seem to be uncomfortable due to the fact that the reader is constantly being distracted from the text and has to read the information below in the footnotes. However, as the story develops, this slightly unusual, though innovative, solution does not cause any literary discomfort anymore. Interestingly enough, the footnotes in *I've Got Your Number* perform a similar function as parenthesis inclusions, because it also shows the inner feelings, thoughts and additional comments of the protagonist. It is noteworthy that at the beginning of the book, the female protagonist states that she liked the book a tremendous amount of footnotes in it, so now she uses these footnotes herself. Therefore, one gets the feeling that the heroine is writing a book about herself, which brings the reader even closer to the protagonist, because the effect of complete immersion into the pragmatics of the book occurs. In addition, it is possible that Sophie Kinsella intends, perhaps, to experiment with various means of language and incorporate something new into the novel, specifically favouring the usage of footnotes. It is worth pointing out that this solution is quite interesting and authentic. All in all, there are 112 footnotes in the novel *I've Got Your Number*.

It is important to accentuate Kinsella's preference for the adoption of various graphic devices throughout the pages of the most of author's novels. As the linguist V.P. Moskvina points out, graphic devices are a common phenomenon among writers of our time. It's a certain way to catch the reader's interest, to highlight a particular word, which in turn has a significant meaning and is fundamental to a certain context. For instance, the font size, its form, colour etc. [8, P. 37] Sophie Kinsella indeed gives preference to visualization in her works, which cannot but attract attention. Her works are characterized by such stylistic units as italics thanks to which the importance of specific words or word combinations is emphasized. Interestingly, this element of syntax is the most common of all the graphic devices used by Kinsella. Such term as capitalization often appears ("I'm going to help REBRAND CLAIROL? Oh my God, this is MASSIVE..." [5, P. 23]). It is also possible to find enumerated phrases of the protagonist. For example, the person sets some goals, analyzes someone's behavior and future plan of action. And then they use the listing of all the points of interest. Intriguingly, the graphic emphasis of the text is also present when the main character is reading a message or an e-mail. In this way, the entire text does not blur together, because the font style and its size changes, therefore enhancing authenticity and sophistication of the entire text.

A further characteristic of Kinsella's conceptual profile is the presence of a large number of composite occasionalisms or author's neologisms. In broad terms, it should be mentioned that Sophie Kinsella masterfully creates new word-formation units, which amaze every time with its creativity and authenticity. These neologisms are formed by combining into one word several nouns or other parts of speech with the help of hyphen ("what-is-wrong-with-the-world expression" [5, P. 17]; "this-is-no-joking-matter tone" [5, P. 26]; "the whole ditching-the-West-Country-accent story" [5, P. 27]; "the you-and-me something" [5, P. 56]; "swivelly-eyed, has-the-world-gone-mad look" [5, P. 149]; "that you-and-me feeling" [5, P. 229]; "Miss I-never-borrow-your-clothes" [2, P. 278]). The writer composes both short occasionalisms and longer ones, which can take up an entire line in a sentence ("the-president-is-planning-to-bomb-Japan-and-only-Will-Smith-can-save-the-world-type secrets" [2, P. 11]; "Best-travel-agent-in-the-world-no-make-this-universe trophy" [2, P. 22]). This is an indicator of a creative personality. It testifies to the writer's inner broad-mindedness. The creation of such occasionalisms is a hallmark of Sophie Kinsella.

The use of interjections is another characteristic of the writer's style, which can be found in many other Sophie's novels. The characters are not ashamed of their feelings. The author also feels that all types of emotions should be allowed and should not be stigmatized. The writer's work is therefore also characterised by the use of obscene language. It is important to outline that in each work, the female protagonist always uses profanity if she wants to. Kinsella consequently departs from the previous stereotypes that postulate that a woman should be mild-tempered, polite and calm. According to Sophie Kinsella, a woman lives her life the way she thinks it should be lived. This is why many female readers like the fact that they can identify themselves with the protagonists, and that Sophie Kinsella is truly a fighter for justice and equality. The heroines can afford to use rather vulgar language. It is not only men who can be heard in Kinsella's works using words such as "fuck", "bullshit" and "bastard" [5], [6]. Women also can express themselves in crude terms about things that disturb and annoy them ("bollocks"; "fuck's sake"; "a bloody nightmare"; "crap"; "piss off"; "bitchy"; "damn"; "deluded loon"; "tosser!"; [2], [5]). From this we can conclude that Kinsella gives her female protagonists the right to choose and to be heard. She does not portray them as airy and

pretty dolls who always look stunning and behave in an exceptionally cultured and mannered way. This embodies a new era of post-feminism in the writing field.

A distinct language is a fascinating and incredibly captivating substance. Perhaps, this is why there is a plethora of foreign-language embeddings on the pages of Sophie Kinsella's books. We cannot neglect the fact that Sophie has an outstanding educational background and speaks different languages. Consequently, she uses various foreign language inclusions in her works, giving a clear sign of her versatile writing personality. The most frequent languages used by the author are Latin and French, as well as German and Italian. For instance, having made an analysis of the book *My Not So Perfect Life* it is possible to make a classification of frequent foreign vocabulary:

- Latin (26,2%): “demeanour”, “rota”, “non sequitur” [5]
- French (41%): “faux pas”, “touché”, protégée, “fiancée”, “camaraderie” [5]
- German (11,5%): “spiel”, “über-person”, “über-prickly” [5]
- Italian (21,3%): “cameo”, “fiasco”, “stucco” [5]

Despite the fact that currently it is quite hard to adopt diverse and original way of narration, Sophie Kinsella demonstrates brilliant writing skills through the power of her innovative thinking. The British writer often uses interesting hyperbolic collocations (e.g. "Generation Grand Canyon" [5, P. 13] instead of "generation gap"), metaphorical allusions (e.g. a veiled reference to a contemporary literary work, *Fifty Shades of Grey*: "Oh my God, this was a mistake. This is Fifty Shades of the Roof. He'll be tying me up to the railings any minute..." [5, P. 31]), as well as allusive derivatives (e.g. "you've been demetered" [5, P. 164] ("to be demetered" is a derivative verb from the name "Demeter")). Such a remarkable and vivid vocabulary represents the cleverness and acuteness of the author's language and conceptual system as a whole.

And now we should shed light on the final distinctive feature of the author's conceptual profile. At the end of all books (in some cases at the beginning) we can witness a couple of pages of acknowledgements dedicated to author's sincere gratitude towards her team, her readers, her family, and the people who inspired her to write a particular book [2], [4], [5], [6]. It should be stated that the writer not only expresses words of gratitude, but also writes some nice phrases. For example, in *My Not So Perfect Life* Sophie adds that no one is perfect, but her life has become more perfect thanks to the people who helped her create that book [5]. This demonstrates a commitment to the use of certain speech acts, namely speech acts of gratitude.

Main results

Having analysed the novels of the British writer Sophie Kinsella, it is worth summarizing the following: the author uses a wide range of different literary units, thanks to which an individual author's lexicon is formed. It is possible to trace the detailed frequent elements that shape the masterful narrative style of the writer. Indeed, it is pivotal to claim that Sophie Kinsella's conceptual profile is profoundly versatile. Her works are characterised by the dominance of such conceptual spheres as *Equality*, *Finding True Vocation*, *Courage*, *Sincerity* and *Love*. The most common features of Kinsella's conceptual profile are the creation of occasionalisms, the use of obscene language, and the use of graphic devices and the display of real and vivid emotions with the help of interjections.

It is quite curious to point out the fact that Sophie Kinsella's real name is Madeleine Wickham. And she published her first seven books under her real name, not the pseudonym. Sophie herself confirms that she uses her pseudonym because the works written and published under the name of Madeleine Wickham differ in their narrative style from Kinsella's books [3]. It is essential to emphasize that Sophie is Madeleine's middle name and Kinsella is the maiden name of her mother. We cannot state precisely, albeit it is possible that in this way the author wanted to assert herself as a strong and independent woman. This fact also contributes to the conceptual profile of Kinsella, which seems to be much broader than that of Madeleine Wickham.

As a result, one conceptual profile exists within the other. In the diagram below, we can observe the difference between the writer's conceptual profiles.

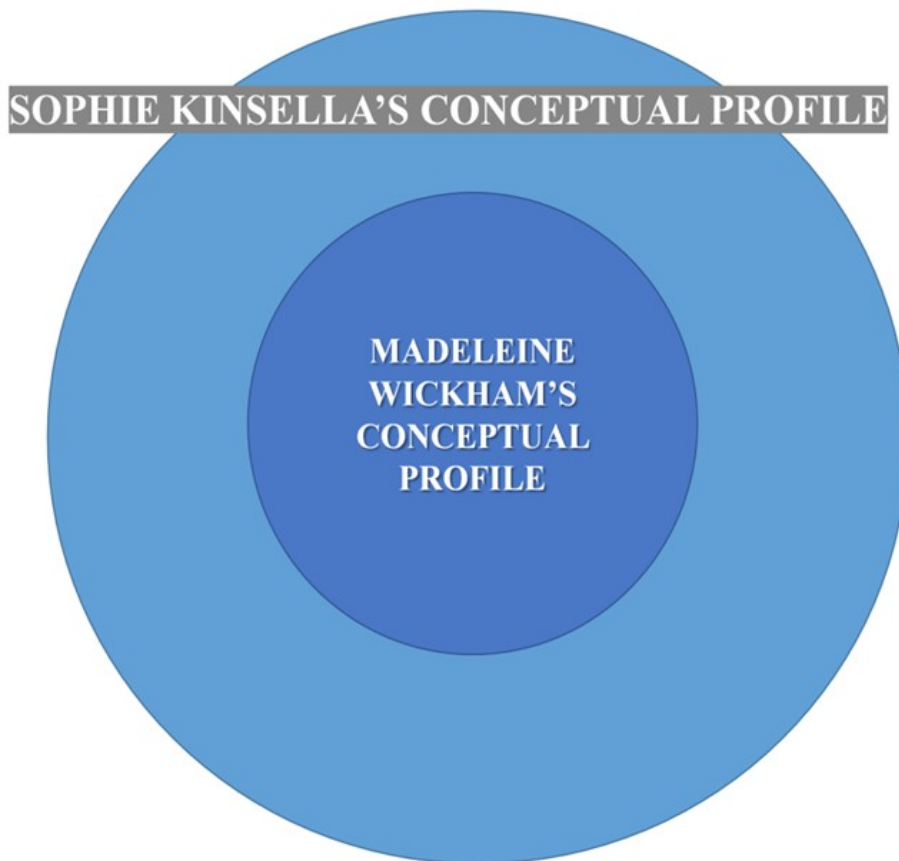


Figure 1 - The model of S. Kinsella's conceptual profile

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Conclusion

Thus, based on the analysis of the linguistic material, it is possible to assume that the primary universe or the original profile of Madeleine Wickham should be more multi-faceted, but it is interesting to note that Sophie Kinsella's profile, on the contrary, is more versatile and is presented much more broadly. Madeleine Wickham's style seems more restrained, detached and distant from the reader (as evidenced, for instance, by the third person narration); whereas Sophie Kinsella's writing style is dear and more familiar to the writer herself and her readership.

In conclusion, it is worth stating the fact that the author's language reflects the culture, the perception of the world and the ideology of the writer. Language in the author's world is the most paramount tool with which a writer is able to demonstrate the depth not only of their writing style, but also to show their society in a particular period of time, when the writer's literary works are created.

Конфликт интересов

Не указан.

Рецензия

Все статьи проходят рецензирование. Но рецензент или автор статьи предпочли не публиковать рецензию к этой статье в открытом доступе. Рецензия может быть предоставлена компетентным органам по запросу.

Conflict of Interest

None declared.

Review

All articles are peer-reviewed. But the reviewer or the author of the article chose not to publish a review of this article in the public domain. The review can be provided to the competent authorities upon request.

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