GLOSSARIES, NOTES AND COMMENTS ON LITERARY TEXTS

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ABSTRACT

Glossaries are designed to assist the reader with a specifically difficult text. In diachronic studies of English, an acute need exists for glossaries for OE, ME, and ENE texts. Notes and comments on literary texts appear either as literature guides or as special chapters at the end of books for both native students and foreign language earners.

Keywords: The Complete Works of Geoffrey Chaucer, The French Lieutenant's Woman, to cross the Rubicon, Romeo and Juliet.

The Complete Works of Geoffrey Chaucer:

Traditionally, glossaries are not discourse-oriented. With retrospect to phraseology, glosses do not reflect instantial use and hence do not single out the base form, which interferes with comprehension and interpretation of the text. Most glossaries deal only with separate words, leaving Pus out. For instance, Skeat's edition of The Complete Works of Geoffrey Chaucer (1919) contains an extensive glossary. However, most Pus are not included and instantial use is not identified in it. The reader may feel frustrated in many cases as dictionaries usually are not helpful in this respect either, especially in cases when the whole PU or some constituents have already become obsolete or diachronic variants exist. For example, the MiE PU a serpent under flours is not given by Skeat either under Serpent or under flours (Skeat 1919). In Chaucer's works, the PU appears twice, Both in an instantial form, see CT, D, 1992–1996; 2001–2003 in Ch. 5.4 and the example below:

Right as a serpent h I t h I m under floures

T I l h e m a y s e e n h I s t y m e f o r t o b y t e ,

Right so this god of love, this hypocrite,

Doth so his cerimonies and obeisaunces

G. Chaucer, The Canterbury Tales, F, 512–515

The French Lieutenant's Woman:

Instantial use may turn out to be a stumbling block in reading and appreciating literature, especially in complicated and sophisticated discourses. I have chosen John Fowles' novel The French Lieutenant's Woman as it is a compulsory item for students of English Literature "A" level and GCSE in the United Kingdom, and English Literature at specialist English Departments in most universities, includeing the University of Latvia. The French Lieutenant's Woman has become part of the English-language canon. The first page of the novel contains an interesting piece of text:

The Cobb17 has invited what familiarity breeds for at least seven hundred years, and the real Lymers will never see much more to it than a long claw of old grey wall that flexes itself against the sea.

J.Fowles, The French Lieutenant's Woman

To Cross the Rubicon:

Handley focuses almost exclusively on separate words, proper names, and Latin or French phrases. For instance, to explain the phrase "you march away from the Rubicon", Handley gives the historical background: Caesar crossed the Rubicon and thus committed himself to war against the Senate and Pompey (Handley [1988] 1993: 63). Handley adds that this implies decision while Fowles' phrase implies the reverse. However, Handley gives neither the PU nor any interpretation of its instantial meaning in discourse. Cf.:

Then amen. Jacta alea est18.' He picked up his hat and   bag from the table and went to the door. But there he hesitated – then held out his hand. 'I wish you well on y o u r m a r c h a w a y f r o m **the Rubicon.**'

J.Fowles, The French Lieutenant's Woman

Interestingly, the same place in Spear's Notes receives a geographical and historical comment on just one word "Rubicon": the river which bounded Caesar's province; his crossing of it in 49 BC marked the start of the war with Pompey (Spear [1988] 1992: 43–44). The literary comment explains that it means that Charles had passed the point of no return. For the learner, however, it is essential to know the base form to cross the Rubicon and its meaning: to make a decision (Longman Dictionary of English Idioms 1979: 280), as well as the pattern of allusion. this knowledge would help to appreciate the discoursal form, enhancing stylistic awareness and comprehension of figurative language, both in this particular case and other instantiations. If properly inculcated, these skills will eventually ensure stylistic awareness of language and turn into a tool for coping with difficult discourses in the future.

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Romeo and Juliet:

Many teaching materials are designed to guide readers and help overcome these difficulties and prevent errors. For instance, Ilyish's notes on and glossary to Shakespeare's play Romeo and Juliet give a good historical insight into many difficult places; however, stylistic use of Pus is virtually overlooked. In some cases the notes are incomplete, giving only some of the semantic and stylistic information needed to perceive and comprehend the case. For example, the instantiation of "a cat with nine lives"19 in the dialogue at the beginning of Act III, Scene 1 receives the explanation that according to a common belief "nine lives" means that cats usually survive because they are said to have nine lives. As the explanation is given in Russian, it does not establish any link with the English PU that serves to provide cohesion for these lines.

The famous dialogue at the beginning of Romeo and Juliet, Act I, Scene 1 (see Appendix V) containing phraseological saturation using a number of Pus with the image-bearing constituent wall20 has been given a brief explanation: "take the wall – to take the upper hand" (Ilyish 1972: 93). These notes and the glossary are designed for advanced studies in English linguistics in specialist departments.

In conclusion, among the reasons why instantial use of Pus is hard to master as a skill (both identification and actual use), one could cite theoretical obscurity or discoursal complexity, as well as insufficient support from dictionaries, glossaries, notes and comments. This is an area of applied stylistics that calls for further exploration, utilisation, and specialist training in stylistic awareness. Phraseological stylistic competence in lexicography will enhance the quality of dictionaries, which would be of great benefit to all users, including native students and L2 learners.

THE LIST OF USED LITERATURE:

1. The Cobb is a long harbour wall at Lyme in England.

2. Italicised by Fowles. Jacta alea est (Latin) – the die is cast.

3. Stylistic Use of Phraseological Units in Discourse.