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## Conceptual Metaphor as a Means of Text Organization (On the Basis of D. Cusack's "Say "No" to Death")

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### ABSTRACT

*The present article demonstrates the text organizing features of the conceptual metaphor. The literary work "Say No to Death" is viewed from the perspective of conceptual metaphor. The symbol "silence" is the key concept of the novel which is revealed via three conceptual metaphors and covers the main idea of the work. The work itself can be divided into three parts; each part corresponds to a different implementation of the symbol "silence" - from good (happiness) to the worst (death).*

**Key words:** *symbol, silence, conceptual metaphor*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Conceptual metaphor has found its distinct place in different disciplines due to thorough investigation of outstanding linguists, cognitologists such as G. Lakoff, M. Johnson, M. Turner and many others. Metaphor is proved to be in our conceptual system, it is pervasive in everyday life, not merely in language but thought and action. "The essence of metaphor is understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another" (Lakoff & Johnson 2003:5). G. Lakoff and M. Johnson argue that many concepts that are important to human beings are either abstract, or delineated. So we need to get a grasp on them by means of other concepts which are understood in clearer terms (spatial orientations, objects, etc.). It should be noted most of our evidence has come from the language – from the meanings of words and phrases the way humans make sense of their experience (Ibid:115).

Conceptual metaphor within the frame of a literary work acquires individual component in the conceptualization of the actual reality. In some cases conceptual metaphor is extended throughout the whole text and becomes a text organizer. A vivid example of such case might be the Australian writer D. Cusack's novel "Say "No" to Death".

### 2. THE SYMBOL "SILENCE" IN "SAY NO TO DEATH"

"A symbol is the use of a concrete object to represent an abstract idea. The term, symbol, when used in literature is often a figure of speech in which a person, object, or situation represent something in addition to its literal meaning. Conventional or traditional literary symbols work in

much the same way, and because they have a previously agreed up on meaning, they can be used to suggest ideas more universal than the physical aspect itself. A symbol may appear in a work of literature in a number of different ways to suggest a number of different things. Most commonly, a symbol will present itself in the form of word, a figure of speech, an event, the total action, a character” (<https://www.google.am/#q=symbolism+in+literature>).

First of all the title of the novel “Say No To Death” catches the reader's attention. It has a metaphorical sense in itself, which reveals a struggle with the hope of life. “No” is said to Illness, Separation, Death. Saying “No” the protagonist – Jan enters into a fight with Death. Having the memories of Love, Happiness with Bart she resists dying. Her aim is everything but yield to Death. So, the message of the novel replenishes Jan’s struggle and expectation of winning after all.

The novel can be analyzed on the basis of the following symbols: colours (grey, yellow), train, net and silence. Within the frame of the given article the symbol “*silence*” is analyzed. Throughout the novel the symbol “*silence*” is revealed via three conceptual metaphors:

- Silence is Happiness
- Silence is Anxiety leading to Denial of Love and Marriage
- Silence is Death

It is noteworthy to mention that the novel itself can be divided into three parts: the first part has a positive atmosphere and thus corresponds to the conceptual metaphor *Silence is Happiness*, the second part expresses anxiety and corresponds to the conceptual metaphor *Silence is Anxiety*, *Denial of Love and Marriage* and the third part is surrounded by negative atmosphere - death, thus corresponds to the conceptual metaphor *Silence is Death*.

The conceptual metaphor *Silence is Happiness* is observed in the relations between Jan and Bart. Silence plays a positive role in their lives. Silence engulfs Jan and Bard providing their relationship with harmony.

*Bart remembered something he had read in a novel about people in love getting to know each other so well, that they could sit together in such harmony, that they did not need words. Sitting out on the front of the ferry, he lit a cigarette for her and one for himself and they smoked there together in silence (p. 44).*

Jan and Bart understand each other even without words, just by looking into each other’s sole, when silence engulfs them and they exchange thoughts without talking. Here we feel that they are happy just sitting side by side in silence. They don't need words; this is a silence which means more than the most beautiful words ever pronounced. This feeling obtains even more significance in time correlation. There is no past or future, only the present. The feeling of happiness in terms of silence reaches its climax in the following passages:

*Somewhere within her, beyond her words, was something for which there were neither words, nor feelings. For her there was no one, but Bart and Bart was the world (p. 32). There was no thought of past or future. Only the present, sweeter and richer than anything Bart had ever experienced or Jan had ever dreamed (p. 47).*

Here we deal with another conceptual metaphor *Bart was world*. Being beside Bart is having the world - neither words, nor feelings can describe Jan's state of mind. Jan and Bart appear in a net created by themselves, in which they feel tender love towards each other and where the silence forms an inseparable part of their feeling.

Gradually Silence becomes a symbol of anxiety, panic. Jan and Bart's happiness is broken by a panic, which is also expressed in Silence. And thus the symbol *Silence* expresses anxiety, panic. This time Silence brings fear, hopelessness, and other negative feelings. The cause is blood which appears on Jan's handkerchief after coughing.

Silence is depicted in its negative meaning not only explicitly but also implicitly via synonymous words.

*Jan stood a moment by the plane tree with its leopard-mottled trunk, hearing the rain-drops pattering against its leaves. Her feet moved as though she was dancing to inaudible music". (p. 63) "She talked to herself inaudibly in the kitchen..." "She was still asleep, when Doreen came her face full of unspoken questions (p. 68).*

"Silence" here is expressed by the lexemes "inaudible" and "unspoken". Now the author expresses Silence in things which shouldn't be silent. Silence exists where it shouldn't be (*unspoken questions*). The breaking of the Silence as a happiness is represented by a metaphorical simile in another passage.

*Doctor's words that Jan has got a lesion have dropped like a wall of glass between her and the world.*

Doctor's words are like a wall of glass. Symbolic use of the expression "a glass wall" is likely to emphasize the irreparable result of its breaking. The word "lesion" emphasizes the idea. So, "the glass wall" breaks her silence of happiness, relax and tender love.

When Jan is taken to hospital, her life becomes senseless, she doesn't want to listen to the patients, she doesn't accept them, their opinions or stories of their illness. The author brilliantly mentions Jan's denial, rejection in the following passage:

*When Jan came in Locklynn, she had deliberately held herself aloof from the patients in the other two beds. She doesn't "belong". She wasn't one of them. She never would be one of them. She was sure she didn't look like them. (p. 85). Bart softened his voice...Jan my lovely, can we consider ourselves engaged? She looked at him for a long time seeming to look into him and beyond him, then her lips moved and the word came soft and final: "No". (p. 84).*

Here the elliptical sentence *She doesn't "belong"* is worth paying attention to. The author doesn't say she doesn't belong to others; instead the verb "belong" is taken in inverted commas. This is most likely done just to emphasize the idea that though she is ill she is different as she doesn't want to be one of the other patients, who are disappointed more and more and find nothing real but the hospital, injections, medicals, X-ray, etc.

Step by step Silence changes its symbolic meaning of happiness for the worse. This time Silence doesn't fold, but "lapsed her". The Silence which has given so tender minutes now catches her near its hollowness.

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*The complaints she had been turning over in her mind to take to him - of the overcrowded room, the poor food, the slatternly attention, died on her tongue (p. 92).*

In the given passage silence is expressed metaphorically with the expression “*died on her tongue*”. Now and on the Silence makes Jan to be enfolded in suspicions, which don’t give her rest.

*She wondered whether they hadn’t been too ready to rush her into a san. Perhaps they were too tired of her. Perhaps Bart had been waiting an excuse to get rid of her. Perhaps Doreen was really as fed-up with her and Bart as she says she was (p. 94). She had protested at first when he kissed her mouth, and gone on protesting for some time and tried to avoid his lips (p. 101).*

The suspicion is expressed via the anaphoric repetition “perhaps” which is repeated three times within one passage (*Perhaps they were too tired of her. Perhaps Bart had been waiting an excuse to get rid of her. Perhaps Doreen was really as fed-up with her*). Hence all the suspicions make Jan deny even her man’s kisses because she doesn’t want him to suffer remaining next to her. In contrast to Jan, Bart laid his lips on hers and it was like a seal of all that lay between them. The author refers to Bart’s kiss as a seal - a silent seal of their love.

The symbol “silence” reaches its climax only when one of the patients warns Jan not to kiss. This time the author uses the symbol “silence” as a personification. *Silence* is similarized with an emanation to emphasize the vividness of the Silence even from the appearance of the san.

*Jan felt the silence close around her. The Silence that hung over Pine Ridge seemed like an emanation of the san. There was something unreal in the way apparently healthy people lay there, relaxed, silent, not even reading (p.105).*

*Then invisible chains bound you in your bed and Silence settled over Pine Ridge like a glass bell shutting out life (p. 109).*

In the given passage silence is compared with *a glass bell*. The “bell” is used metaphorically as an omen of alarm, which serves as a thing breaking the Silence. Silence from then on threatens Jan not to break itself (*The silence in the house at night was itself a menace*). There is no way out for her. Her illness is so serious that she should deny Bart’s kisses. Step by step Silence becomes severe. If in the past it was according to her will, now Silence is obligatory in the Pine Ridge sanatorium. Jan is condemned to bed in complete silence, which is obligatory. Silence becomes the seal of waiting.

Silence is degrading from Happiness to Denial and then it should come up to its culmination, that is to say Jan’s Death. One of the most important things is the first usage of the word “dying” by a patient.

*I’m afraid of dying and I’m afraid of not dying. Jan stood still, the words falling like ice into her mind (p. 153).*

In this passage we observe a paradox. One of the patients is afraid of dying and at the same time afraid of not dying. The very idea of it is like ice falling into her mind. Closer observation shows the intensification of the use of similes: *glass wall, glass bell and ice*. The latter one is considered more expressive than “a glass wall” or “a glass bell”. The patient’s words make Jan think about death, the end of her life and her illness. Her words serve as an omen of something which will later on cause cold. Even only the word “dying” creates ideas of coldness,

unbreakable ice. Jan wants to catch something outside that Silence as a means of escape from its menace, its final meaning, which is Death. The more severe becomes the Silence, the greater becomes Jan's desire to find good omens for living.

*Going into the hospital she felt the acceleration of her pulse. Surely a day like this with the world dreaming in a Peace for which there was no name, surely a day like this was a good omen (p. 154).*

Once again Silence expresses Peace. The peace becomes so real, so usual, that Jan isn't eager to resist, to deny it any more. She accepts that Silence is embodied in Peace. For the first time since she has come to the san, the peace no longer frightens her, the solitude no longer oppresses her. So she accepts the significance of Silence – solitude. To accept solitude is to accept Death, to which her doom will lead her. If so far the author has just hinted the symbolic representation of the word "silence", at the end of the novel she wants the reader to see it visually and the word "silence" appears in front of the reader in capital letters.

*There were large placards above the patients' beds with "SILENCE" upon it (p. 293).*

*Jan hears the doctor's decision without comment. She watches Sister Conrick hang above her bed the card with "SILENCE" printed on it in large black letters, and for a moment her heart sank. Being on Silence itself didn't worry her. Silence had become second nature since her days in the flat alone. The best thing about being on Silence is that you do not have to search for the right words to answer people (p. 350).*

Of great importance is the sentence "She watches Sister Conrick hang above her bed the card with "SILENCE" printed on it in large black letters". The colour black has a symbolic representation. Its direct association is death. The semantic group of such words and expressions as *hell, hole, darkened ward, dark faces, silent laughter, lantern* and as well as the repetition of the phrase "to be on silence, to have silence imposed on her, to keep silence" actualize the conceptual metaphor *Silence is Death*.

### 3. CONCLUSION

Thus, in the novel "Say 'No' to Death" the symbol "silence" represents Jan's life. As a result we have the degradation of the symbol "Silence". It goes from good to the worst - from Happiness to Denial of Love and Marriage and from Denial to Death. The degradation of one and the same symbol leads to the comprehension of the novel, its psychological factor. The author depicts the protagonist's struggle for health, for life and for victory at the same time pleading the people to give up keeping Silence and to speak out the problems of the time. The current health conditions of Australia are criticized in the novel. Jan's silence is similarized with people's silence. The author points out Jan's death as a result caused by her own SILENCE. In her character the author has an aim to wake all those Australians, who are in Happiness for having just what they have, to raise their Anxiety even for others' sake and remind them about Death which will come in case of cold disregard. As a result, we come across degradation, this time in the shape of the message of the novel (Happiness - Anxiety - Death). Thus, the symbol "silence" in the third part of the novel wholly reveals the metaphoric title of the novel, and the hidden message of it. "Say 'No' to Death" means don't keep silence when there is a problem, otherwise silence will lead to death.

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