

## Non-verbal markers of affect realization in English literary fictional discourse

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**Abstract.** The article reports on non-verbal markers of affect in English literary fictional discourse. Affect has been defined as a turbulent short-run intensive emotional response. Although affect is expressed by emotionally coloured nouns and adjectives, interjections, expressive syntactic structures, and graphic means, these verbal means are necessarily accompanied by the non-verbal ones. The author of the literary fictional discourse informs the reader about the personage's utmost anxiety by the description of his/her facial gestures, movements and psychophysical symptoms. The personage's anxiety also becomes explicit by the author's description of the personage's voice transformations, changes in breathing, failure or weakness of their limbs, increased sweating, intense heart beating, shivering. The author of the literary fictional discourse informs the reader about the personage's utmost anxiety by the description of his/her movements that are meaningless or inadequate in the described situation.

**Keywords:** *emotion, affect, gesture, face expression, voice transformation.*

**Introduction.** So far, the most decisive attempts to penetrate into the human mind and comprehend the nature of emotional processes have been made by psychologists. Many of them have come to recognize that a great deal of human emotional functioning is rooted in unconscious processes. Scientific studies of the T. Sobol-Shikler, for example, offer a deep and useful insight into the conceptual field of this phenomenon by showing that humans pick up the emotional content of unconscious facial expressions that are not intended to influence the perception of others [33]. Van den Noort M. et.al. also insists that humans evaluate objects (as for example "good" or "bad") at an unconscious level [26]. Bechara et al. demonstrate how certain brain injuries affect emotional and nervous system responses to events, even before conscious awareness exists, and how they consequently affect decision-making and risk-taking [3]. The cognitive role of emotions and their influence on human cognition and decision making is demonstrated in the works of Kahneman and Tversky that report on how emotions influence economic decision-making [22].

Linguistic research of emotional speech testify that the emotional state of affect is a kind of filter that levels socio-cultural characteristics of a language personality. However, the studies of affect are presented by only a few fragmentary investigations that are predominantly devoted to structural-syntactic characteristics of affective speech – the works by M. Suslova (1998) and O. Liysenkova (2007). K. Belyayeva (2011) offered a paradigm of structural-semantic peculiarities of affective speech. Apart from these, K. Nikulina (2015) addressed the problem of lexical markers of affective speech, N. Kravchenko (2016) addressed affective inner speech of a protagonist of German fiction. The Russian researchers Y. Mazhar (2005) and A. Lavrova (2011) investigated affect as a pretended state of a speaker contrived as a means of manipulation by the audience.

Thus far, modern linguistics is not deeply involved in the research of the state of affect in all varieties of its verbal and non-verbal realizations in the language of literary prose. The non-verbal markers of affect should be given close and detailed attention. It is with the feeling of this need that this brief study has been prepared.

The *aim* of this research is to identify non-verbal characteristics of affect realization in English literary fictional discourse.

A closer look is taken at the following three aspects: 1. The interrelation of affect, feelings and emotions. 2. The definition of affect as an emotional response. 3. The classification of non-verbal markers of affect on the samples from English fictional discourse.

The *material* under analysis is represented by 700 speech episodes taken from English literary discourse in which the characters express affect.

The research is based upon fictional discourse because it is where reproduced speech and real communication are brought together at most. As Bigunova notes, in fictional literary discourse, dialogue is aimed at creating the effect of objectiveness and authenticity of events, as the author tries to refrain from the description and evaluation of the events, delegating this function to the speaking hero [6]. The fact that a writer reflects real-life regularities in the personages' speech and some preferences of the authors are leveled by the use of big samples can be considered conventional.

The linguistic analysis of the selected data has been based on the application of *general scientific methods*, namely: the methods of synthesis and analysis that promoted the holistic research into the literary discourse; the method of observation that enabled the identification of the peculiar characteristics of the investigated data; the descriptive method that was helpful in establishing the variant and invariant characteristics of the collected evidence; *special linguistic methods*, namely: the contextual-interpretational method was used to identify the pragmatic properties of the speech realization of affect, the communicants' background knowledge and intentions in each communicative situation; the componential analysis was helpful in establishing how affect is realized in a certain speech situation due to certain non-verbal means.

### **The definition of affect as an emotional response.**

Although feeling and affect are routinely used interchangeably, B. Massumi urges not to confuse affect with feelings and emotions. He claims that affect is not a personal feeling. According to the scholar, feelings are personal and biographical, emotions are social, and affects are prepersonal. Furthermore, B. Massumi argues that an affect is a non-conscious experience of intensity; it is a moment of unformed and unstructured potential. Of the three central terms in this article – feeling, emotion, and affect – affect is seen as the most abstract because affect cannot be fully realized in language, and because affect is

always prior to and/or outside of consciousness [24].

As Wetherell rightly remarks, the concept of affective practice tries to explain how affect is embodied, situated and operates psychologically [35].

Massumi claims that affect is the body's way of preparing itself for action in a given circumstance by adding a quantitative dimension of intensity to the quality of an experience. The body has a grammar of its own that cannot be fully captured in language because it "doesn't just absorb pulses or discrete stimulations; it infolds contexts..." [24, p. 30].

On the other hand, Greco and Stenner are convinced that sharp distinctions between affect and emotion probably cannot be sustained [19]; similarly, Leys argues that there are connections between them. She claims that affects operate within the body. Hence "the body not only 'senses' and performs a kind of 'thinking' below the threshold of conscious recognition and meaning but ... because of the speed with which the autonomic, affective processes are said to occur, it does all this before the mind has time to intervene" [23, p. 450].

Tomkins defines the term "affect" metaphorically: "The affect mechanism is like the pain mechanism in this respect. If we cut our hand, saw it bleeding, but had no innate pain receptors, we would know we had done something which needed repair, but there would be no urgency to it. Like our automobile which needs a tune-up, we might well let it go until next week when we had more time. But the pain mechanism, like the affect mechanism, so amplifies our awareness of the injury which activates it that we are forced to be concerned, and concerned immediately" [34, p. 88].

As Shouse points out, the power of affect lies in the fact that it is unformed and unstructured. It is affect's "abstractivity" that makes it transmittable in ways that feelings and emotions are not, and it is because affect is transmittable that it is potentially such a powerful social force. Affect precedes thought and is as stable as electricity. Shouse claims that affect is unformed and unstructured (unlike feelings and emotions) it can be transmitted between bodies. The importance of affect rests upon the fact that in many cases the message consciously received may be of less import to the receiver of that message than his or her non-conscious affective resonance with the source of the message [31, p. 12].

Having systematized the positions of the psychologists and cognitive linguists, we offer the following definition of affect: affect is a turbulent short-run intensive emotional response, predominantly of negative character, accompanied by the recipient's loss or weakening of the will power and characterized by rising emotional excitement.

Cognitive linguists claim that affect is accompanied with blocking of speech production: "speech is reduced to interjections, outcries, gibbering, as well as obscenities" [4].

Psychologists report that the state of affect is characterized by vivid physiological and pantomimical manifestation. There occur changes in the rhythm of breathing (the person breathes with difficulty, pants and gasps) and cardiac activity (the heart tails off or beats increasingly). The violation of vascular supply is observed (the person grows pale or blushes), the endocrine glands malfunction (tears, mouth drying or copious salivation, sweating); body muscles are put to work (gesture, body language) [30; 9].

It is common knowledge that affect is expressed by the following verbal means: by emotionally coloured nouns and adjectives, interjections, expressive syntactic structures, as well as graphic means. However, in any and every affect context these language means are necessarily accompanied by the non-verbal means. Moreover, affect can be realized by non-verbal means only. Thus, it is to the latter we will now turn, offering our analysis of their manifestation in English literary fictional discourse.

**The non-verbal markers of affect in English literary fictional discourse.** The author of the literary fictional discourse informs the reader about the personage's utmost anxiety by the description of his/her facial gestures, movements and psychophysical symptoms.

The facial gesture of the personage in the state of affect is depicted by means of the nouns nominating particular face features (mainly eyes and lower jaw) and the details that signal about their unordinary look (the eyes widen, tears appear in the eyes, the jaw quivers). Besides, the names of emotions are provided, e.g.:

- *Eyes wide with panic, catastrophic physical shock on his face, I was too stunned to speak* [15, p. 128].
- *Her eyes were bright with anger* [28, p. 321].
- *The landscaper stumbled back off the stool, eyes wide in shock* [11, p. 262].
- *Marks's eyes widened in shock at this* [12, p. 98].
- *His eyes were wide, panicked* [14, p. 172].
- *Nicholas felt fresh hot tears sting his eyes* [21, p. 39].
- *His eyes were bulging, shifting from me to the corpse and back again* [15, p. 48].
- *Her jaw began to quiver* [14, p. 202].

The fact that the personage has grown pale or is blushing becomes explicit in the author's commentary by means of the adjectives that nominate colour and the verb of wide semantics *to be*, as well as the verbs nominating the change of state *to get, to become, to grow, to go*. The adjectives *red* and *pink* and the noun *redness* are associated in the reader's mind with the emotion of embarrassment, shame, anger and fury, while the adjectives *white* and *pale* are associated with the emotion of unpleasant surprise, shock, horror, despair:

- *His face was red with anger* [7, p. 261].
- *He was so furious that he had changed colour. His ears were white, his cheeks were a deep crimson, his nose almost blue* [17, p. 203].

Here is an episode illustrating Titchy's horror when her father-in-law played a joke on her role-played the arrival of ghost. To mark her shock and horror the author describes her complexion (white-faced), her gasps and sobs, stumbling instead of walking, collapsing on the floor, and even such a physical response, as being sick:

*White-faced, Titchy stumbled from the room. She felt terribly ill. She just made it to her bathroom, bent over the toilet and was dreadfully sick.*

*But the toilet had been sealed with transparent plastic.*

*Titchy collapsed in a sobbing heap on the bathroom floor, gasping between sobs, "I'll kill him. I'll kill him!"* [1, p. 190].

The changes in breathing caused by emotional shock are described by the use of the verbs *breathe, gasp, pant*

and their derivatives, e.g.:

- *He angrily hissed under his **breath*** [25, p. 172].
- *Strickland, stunned and suddenly **breathless**, tried to suck in air* [7, p. 29].
- *Her **breaths** started coming in harsh **gasps*** [7, p. 81].
- *She **gasp**ed in stunned surprise* [25, p. 131].
- *Lungs burning, he drew **the deepest breath** he could and yelled: 'Help!'* [21, p. 39].

The personage's anxiety also becomes explicit by the author's description of the voice transformations, based on the verbs *yell, screech, scream, stammer, whimper, shout, gurgle, whine, growl, howl, explode, shriek, whisper, murmur, roar, sob, cry* and their derivatives:

- *He **screamed** with a genuine look of panic on his face* [16, p. 209].
- *She let out a **shriek**. She **screamed** again, a furious **shriek*** [18, p. 309].
- *Handy leapt at him, **growling in fury**, throwing his arms around Budd's neck, pulling him down to the floor* [12, p. 109].
- *Michael **howled in panic**, tugging furiously at the knob* [13, p. 271].
- *Stokes **yelled out** again in a voice now tinged with fear bordering on **hysteria*** [10, p. 112].

The author informs the reader about the personages' voice transformations by means of the noun *voice* and emotional evaluative adjectives, defining it and performing the stylistic function or the epithet:

- *"Oh, my God—a bullet hole." Portia's **voice** was **high with shock**. "Get something! I don't know. A towel." [13, p. 227].*
- *'Who am I?' she cried **in so terrible a voice that he ceased his yells*** [20, p. 91].

In the following episode the following non-final markers of affect are used: rising and trembling voice, fierce voice, the person shrieks, stares, the eyes grow red:

*Her voice began to rise and tremble. She said fiercely, "You sonofabitch! Don't give me this soft treatment. I know all your fucking tricks."*

*Then she **shrieked**, "This must stop! I will not have a dick tailing me!" Staring, those marvelous eyes grew red* [5, p. 42].

The author's description of the voice transformations involves naming the particular emotions that the personage is experiencing: in the state of affect the personage's voice becomes *unrecognizable with hate and passion, raw terror in the voice* is heard:

*The **voice** that came over the phone was **unrecognizable with hate and passion*** [29, p. 218].

*"What the hell's he doing to us?" Annie heard **raw terror in her own voice**. "Christ, what's he doing?"* [28, p. 186].

To make the inner feelings of the personage obvious for the reader the authors of the literary discourse describe the state of personage's heart as the "organ of feelings". Thus, the noun *heart* is used in collocations with verbs denoting physical movement, e.g.:

- *Altman's **heart pounded furiously** at the betrayal* [11, p. 46].
- *Her **heart** was about to **burst out** of her chest* [7, p. 251].

The readers have long associated heart's intense beating with astonishment and shock.

Increased sweating, intense heart beating, shivering, changes in the personage's temperature and other similar physiological responses are described by means of the nouns nominating certain parts of body and physiological responses of the body to the shock, e.g.:

- *Anger and embarrassment caused Griff's face to **grow hot*** [8, p. 271].
- *"Did he really kill all those women?" she asked for the tenth time. **Her lower lip still trembled** with the aftereffects of shock* [28, p. 36].
- ***His heart stopped** before stuttering into a **dangerously rapid beat*** [8, p. 197].
- ***Bellamy's breathing became as rapid and choppy as her heartbeat*** [7, p. 102].

The author of the literary fictional discourse informs the reader about the personage's utmost anxiety by the description of his/her movements that are meaningless or inadequate in the described situation, such as scratching one's hair, fiddling with the hair of things like a button or a pen. Such unconscious movements betray the personage's excitement and embarrassment and are described by the use of corresponding verbs and verb collocations.

The personage's agitation becomes explicit through the author's description of his/her trembling lips, failure or weakness of their limbs, involving the verbs *tremble, shake, weaken*, e.g.:

*He could see her starting to **tremble, to weaken**. She **raised her hands, fingers splayed, and backed away*** [10, p. 173].

*Michael, **shaking with panic**, stood in the checkout line* [14, p. 178].

The verbs chosen by the author for identifying locomotor emotional symptoms (*leap at smb, tear at smth, drum one's legs, shove smb hard*) bear emotive weight and imply extreme impetuosity (*threw arms around smb's neck*) or hard-fought character of movements (*drum one's legs*) serving to unveil affect.

- *Handy leapt at him, growling in fury, **throwing his arms around Budd's neck, pulling him down to the floor*** [12, p. 94].
- *Muttering an invective, Griff turned away, but Rodarte **grabbed** him by the shoulder, brought him back around, and **shoved him up hard** against the wall. "Don't turn your back on me, you cocky fucker"* [7, p. 39].
- *He **slammed his left hand down flat** on the table* [16, p. 157].

Our observations upon the data show that nominating such a psychophysical symptom as a drop or a rise in temperature, as well as the feeling of fever serve to identify the personage's strong inner anxiety or fear. The following episode illustrates such non-verbal signs of affect as sweating, blinking and taking great gulps of air, as well as rising the voice to roaring:

*He turned to the page indicated and found himself staring down at a full-page spread advertising *The Case of the Rising Tides*. The book jacket was there in all its glory. He glared at the naked photograph of his wife and let out a roar of, "**Slut!**" The bookshop assistants went calmly about their work. Any bookshop had its daily quota of nuts*

as far as they were concerned.

*Sweating with fury, he went to the map section and jerked out a road atlas, blinking to clear his fury-filmed eyes until he located the village of Drim. Then he bought an Ordnance Survey map for the Sutherland area and strode out of the shop, taking great gulps of air.*

*"I'll kill her!" he yelled to an astonished passerby [2, p. 40].*

In another example Kazumi has just been ditched by her lover. Her movements and gestures betray extreme excitement: anger and despair:

*"It's just that... I can't do this. I am so, so sorry. I have to go."*

*She nodded, taking it all in, the anger flaring.*

*"Go on, then. Go back to your wife."*

*"I'm so sorry."*

*She picked up the silver candlestick and threw it at me, a wild throw that made it fly past my head and left a splash of white candle wax on the tablecloth. She lashed out at our special meal with furious fists, and it all went crashing. Glasses and vegetables, silver cutlery and chopsticks, pretty napkins splashed with soy sauce. Across the table, to the floor, fragments of our special meal smashing against my legs. Just ruined, the lot of it.*

*'Go back to your home.'* [27, p. 175].

Thus, verbs of physical movement are used together

with nouns, used as direct objects towards which the action is performed (throwing a candlestick, lashing out at things with fists, crashing and ruining things).

**Conclusions and suggestion.** Thus, in fictional literary discourse the state of affect is depicted not only in the personage's direct or inner speech, but also in their non-verbal behavior. The author comments on outer affect manifestation, such as: a) changes in the facial gesture of the personage; b) changes in the personage's complexion (the person grows pale or blushes); c) changes in the rhythm of breathing (the person breathes with difficulty, pants and gasps); d) voice transformations (whispering, screaming, yelling); e) increased cardiac activity; f) the endocrine glands malfunction (tears, mouth drying or copious salivation, sweating); g) meaningless or inadequate movements and gestures betraying extreme excitement (fiddling with things, clenching fists, banging the table with the fist, squatting, smashing things, pushing an interlocutor, grabbing or beating him, etc.).

It is hoped that this study will prove the importance of non-verbal means in creating the image of a personage experiencing the state of affect.

This study points towards the need for investigation into the non-verbal means of expressing affect in film discourse. It would be helpful to unveil gestures, body movements and face expression that actors use to express affect.

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