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DANGEROUS? EXCITING? REAL?
(BASED ON THE BOOK “CORALINE” BY NEIL GAIMAN)

Do you like to be scared? Have you ever got goosebumps in your body not from cold or excitement but from fear? Can you imagine getting such feelings while reading a book?

The world of the unknown has always attracted children and teenagers. They get even more appealed if it brings mystery and a sense of fear altogether. I've heard it many times from my classmates. Once in our English lesson we spoke about our favourite book genres. The most popular ones were horror stories. I was confused about the things that excited my friends so much. And I wondered: “What makes a horror story so magnetic?”

The most popular with my classmates was a book by Neil Gaiman “Coraline”. The author described it as a horror story for girls. That was what I was looking for.

The gothic genre is associated with the feeling of terror and fear. It is filled with negative emotions and goes into the darkest corners of people's minds. But these characteristics are usually avoided in the books for children because they aren't considered suitable for them. I suggest that Neil Gaiman uses lexical expressive means to give his book some characteristics of the gothic horror story.

The aim of the research is to identify the lexical expressive means and their functional and semantic features in order to give characteristics of the gothic horror story to a book.

I have set the following objectives:

1. To study the main lexical expressive means.
2. To identify the features of lexical expressive means.
3. To determine lexical expressive means used in the book “Coraline” by Neil Gaiman.
4. To highlight their functional and semantic features in the book.

The subject of the research is functional and semantic features.

The object of the research is lexical expressive means in the book “Coraline” by Neil Gaiman.

The importance of the research of lexical expressive means and their effect on young readers is crucial. Analyzing the use of gothic elements in literature for teenagers sheds light on the complexity of the language young readers are exposed to. Understanding how these elements are adapted for young readers in the book “Coraline” by Neil Gaiman contributes to the broader view on the development of literary genres for different age groups.

The expressiveness of the speech is closely connected with the word. Words in context get additional lexical meanings. Thus, lexical expressive means are the means of a language which suppose the specific usage of words to make a speech more figurative.

The main types of lexical expressive means are metaphor, metonymy, epithet, simile, personification. In the genre of gothic horror, where creating a vivid atmosphere is crucial, these lexical expressive means become powerful tools to engage teenage readers emotionally.

In my work I identified 143 examples of them in the book “Coraline” by Neil Gaiman. All lexical expressive means were ranged according to the frequency of their usage in the book: simile – 26 %, epithet – 24 %, metonymy – 21 %, metaphor – 17 %, personification – 12 %.

The main character-antagonist in the story is the other mother. The author uses a lot of lexical means with negative characteristics, mostly simile, in her description. “*Her skin was white as paper*” – the author compared her skin to a sheet of paper. It looked so pale as if she was even sick.

With the help of the following examples of simile the reader would definitely imagine a famous mythic character Medusa the Gorgon: “*The hair on her head drifted like plants under the sea*”, “*Her hair was wriggling like lazy snakes on a warm day*”, “*The other mother’s wet-looking black hair drifted around her head, like the tentacles of a creature in the deep ocean*”. It brought some kind of fear to the reader preparing him to what to expect in that new unknown world Coraline got into. Then the author compared the other mother to a dragon: “*clouded over, as if a dragon had breathed on it, and it cleared*”. It symbolises a struggle or a fight.

Moreover, the book has an epigraph “Fairytale are more than true: not because they tell us that dragons exist, but because they tell us that dragons can be beaten”. On the one hand, these words calm the reader down about the ending of

the story: it will be good. On the other hand, a dragon in fairytales is a symbol of greed, temptation, or fear. This way, the victory over the dragon becomes a victory over your weaknesses.

Metaphor is used to describe the weather and to show the mystery of the real world and the artificiality of the other world: “*ghost-world*”, “*pale nothingness*” and “*formless whiteness*”.

Based on the idea that eyes are the mirror of the soul the author doesn’t give a chance to look into the eyes of the characters from the other world. He uses epithets to pay attention to this detail: “*buttons, big and black and shiny*”. The unpleasant atmosphere of the other world is obvious: “*a cold, musty smell*”, “*quiet and empty and deserted*”. Epithets help the author to create the images of the characters and enhance the storyline.

The sudden and unpredictable moments are described with the help of metonymy: “*The black shape went into the drawing room; and Coraline followed it a little nervously*”, “*A hand touched her shoulder*”. By replacing names with suggestive words, Gaiman creates a sense of mystery and keeps the story unpredictable.

Personification is used to show the transition to the world which is not real: “*a thick white fog had lowered over the house*”, “*the door was looking at her*”, “*Mirrors are never to be trusted*”, “*It was rain that meant business, and currently its business was turning the garden into a muddy, wet soup*”. It breathes life into objects, weather and creatures making the story feel like a fairy tale. It symbolizes the shift to a magical world within the storyline.

Thus, the chosen lexical expressive means are crucial to the storytelling in “Coraline”. They impact character portrayal, atmospheric creation and the fascinating experience in general.

As a result of analyzing the lexical expressive means in the book “Coraline” by Neil Gaiman, I came to the conclusion that:

- the gothic horror genre, to which the book “Coraline” belongs, often relies on vivid descriptions, symbolism and atmospheric elements, and the chosen lexical expressive means are used for showing the dark, mysterious and supernatural theme characteristic of gothic literature;

- while describing the main character-antagonist (the other mother) Neil Gaiman uses lexical means with negative characteristics, mostly simile;

- personification is used to show the transition to the world which is not real;

- metaphor is used to describe the weather and to show the mystery of the real world and the artificiality of the other world;

- based on the idea that eyes are the mirror of the soul the author doesn’t give a chance to look into the eyes of the characters from the other world. He uses different epithets to pay attention to this detail;

- the sudden and unpredictable moments are described with the help of metonymy; the author highlights these situations for the main character and the reader gets the feeling of fear.

My hypothesis that the author of the book created a “dangerous” world with the help of lexical expressive means was confirmed. Analyzing their usage, the research work provides understanding why such linguistic tools can be effective in attracting attention and imagination of teenager readers. The reader gets the feelings of fear, disgust, anxiety, loneliness of the other world and mystery and unpredictability of the real one. The reader gets the understanding what is good and what is evil.

Considering the popularity of the book with teenagers, the research shows how the studied lexical expressive means resonate with the audience. Analyzing their usage, the research work provides understanding why such linguistic tools can be effective in attracting attention and imagination of teenager readers.

As the epigraph to my research I chose the following words: “Sometimes, a door is closed for a very good reason...” Like *Coraline* I decided to open the door. For her it was dangerous and appealing at the same time. But for me it turned out to be full of exciting findings which showed me the richness of the English language.