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HYPERBOLES WE LIVE BY [?]

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ГИПЕРБОЛЫ,
КОТОРЫМИ МЫ ЖИВЕМ [?]

В статье феномен гиперболы рассматривается как тест, который, с одной стороны, позволяет обнаружить слабости когнитивного подхода в теории тропов, с другой – обнаруживает силу риторического взгляда на троп. Подвергается сомнению идея, что риторика рассматривала тропы лишь как украшение речи. Подчеркивается роль тропов в культивировании коммуникативного пространства. Метафора и гипербола рассматриваются как тропы, наиболее зависимые от языковых конвенций. Связь между этими тропами показана на примере антономазии. С риторической точки зрения метафоры и гиперболы задавали культурные эталоны. Парадокс гиперболы заключается в том, что, имея дело с гомогенным объектом, она в то же время не вступает в активное взаимодействие с ним (с неким максимумом или минимумом), в то время как метафора, имея дело с гетерогенным объектом, активно взаимодействует с привлеченным доменом, что и отражено в когнитивном подходе.

Ключевые слова: гипербола, метафора, когнитивный подход, риторический подход.

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**Trope's value for rhetoric
and cognitive science**

In cognitive-oriented papers the following logic is reproduced.

1. Rhetoric considered tropes as mere embellishments of speech.

2. This point of view persisted for a long time, so the tropes in everyday speech caused no interest.

3. In actual fact, the tropes have a cognitive nature, they are related to mapping, with the network of concepts, which we impose on the world, and which play an important role in everyday life.

The first statement seems to me to be wrong. A rhetorical approach to the trope, does not seem more superficial in relation to the one adopted today, but, on the contrary, is deeper and – mainly – socially justified. I believe that we have something to learn from classical rhetoric and cognitive approach adopted today can be enriched and, sometimes, corrected.

There is no doubt that the tropes, particularly metaphors, are more than «device of the poetic imagination and the rhetorical flourish» [Lakoff and Johnson, 1980]. Similar comments on the hyperbole are also true. Laura Cano Mora states in her paper: «...this paper runs contrary to traditional beliefs that figures of speech are not conceptually useful but meant, as Pollio et al. [Pollio H.R. et al. «Figurative Language and cognitive psychology». Language and Linguistic Process, 5, pp. 141-167] condemns, to «beautify prosaic ideas». Rather than embellishments of ordinary literal language with little cognitive value of their own, hyperboles should

be viewed as powerful communicative and conceptual tools» [Cano Mora, 2009, p. 34]. In this sense «cognitive turn» in relation to the figures should be welcome. But the ‘rhetorical flourish’ – is a poor equivalent for Greek κόσμησις, which includes verbal cosmos (space) organization, while ‘beautify’ does not reflect the context in which Latin term ‘ornatio’ is used. Modern word *cosmetic* (substance that you put on your face or body to make it more attractive) and *cosmos* (the universe) look like a coincidence in the way they sound. The Greek κόσμος primarily meant ‘order’, ‘proper organization’.

Attitude towards figures as mere embellishment is not as much preserved (second position), but has rather developed in the era of the rhetoric decline, when the figures were studied almost exclusively in poetic speech, which also serves as the subject of justified criticism from the cognitive approach [Gibbs, 1994; Turner, 1998].

De facto figures were not mere embellishments for antic rhetoric: they were, firstly, the tools of persuasion, secondly, the method of language cultivation. The first is clear from Quintilian’s metaphor of verbal weapons, which are not made of gold, it is too soft, though sparkling, but are made of steel, which is capable to both shine and strike [Quintilian, 10.1.30]: «Yet I would not wish that the arms of the orator should be squalid from foulness and rust. But that there should be a brightness of them like that of steel, which may dismay opponents, and by which the mind and the eye may at once be dazzled, and not like gold or silver, which is unwarlike, and dangerous rather to the wearer than to the enemy» [1909, p. 253].

Second – and this is more important – that the figures served as a means of verbal space construction, means of cultivation, cultivation of language – this stems from the very practice of figures nomination, often irritating modern scholars. The concept of cultivation, wild pitch processing lies at the very heart of rhetoric, Quintilian uses it. But even more than in the theoretical understanding this approach is manifested in the practice of ancient rhetoric. Rhetoric has worked as follows. Successful precedents in speech received a name (clear enough for native speakers), a definition, often of a poor quality, and replenished the list of figures as samples, which stimulated imitation. In this way civilization was constructed both in the sphere of words and in the field of architecture. Terms were coined, figures described, examples given. Neither Quintilian with his figures, nor Vitruvius with his orders have not left strict and exhaustive systematization, they only offered their catalogs. But these catalogs have played a huge role in the construction of verbal civilization and antique civilization as such.

Present day systematizations of tropes seem to be much more logical and better than antique. We avoid such logical absurdities as consideration personification along with a metaphor, while it is just a kind of a metaphor, and exclude from tropes everything that is not related to the figurative meaning of the word. For example, we do not consider ‘harientizm’ to be a trope and do not use the term. It used to describe funny, sarcastic speech, though at the same time we have agreed to call irony a trope where a word is not used in its literal meaning. We prepare systematizations, but not catalogs and try to

exhaust all possibilities of adopted classification principles. Jacobson's wonderful theory, based on the opposition of metaphor and metonymy, hardly needs any other tropes (Jacobson, 1956). An ingenious mix of metaphors to a double synecdoche in «General rhetoric» [Obschaya..., 2006, p. 198] speaks for itself. But our systematization does not go beyond the academic audience and does not have a significant effect on society. We are engaged in descriptions rather than cultural construction. Criticizing the ancient authors for the «pre-scientific» approach, we need to understand that it was not that they did our job poorly, but that they did their job well. We are not constructors of civilization, we see this construction from our descriptive point of view, overlooking some things and exaggerating others. These are in my view the shortcomings of the attitude to tropes adopted today – they are seen as the main tool for turning reality into concepts.

We have inherited the old terms that were mostly applied to poetic speech and were considered as external techniques. And now, knowing the Sapir – Whorf hypothesis, having gone through the experience of manipulation with the help of metaphors (especially in totalitarian regimes) and having developed the understanding of frames for the recognition of images, we have found that the tropes are much more serious things than we thought before. But being passive observers, we interpret the tropes as masters, and ourselves - as their slaves. The main message of today's paradigm is this: tropes determine our thoughts, and we ourselves do not notice it. The moment of unconscious perception becomes crucial in modern theories. It is consistent with what we know today about the decision-making [Kahneman, 1996, p. 211] and the role of stereotypes in the classification of reality [Rosch, 1981], although contrary to some other facts. For example, totalitarian regimes' mass propaganda, which involved entire population, led to the dismantling of metaphors, quite consciously perceived [Khazagerov, 2016]. Whatever it is, but the view of tropes adopted today, the map, we are provided with, is giving us a very relative advantage. The map is either drawn for us by a manipulator or it is fatally inherent in the language picture of the world. The creative, cultivating role of tropes eludes us.

For rhetoric the tropes, their types and some implementations were boundary stones, allowing to master thematic fields. They, like common places, were a way to speak, and only as a result, to think about a specific topic. The «Map» consisted of these boundary stones. Life in the world of tropes looked like a free wandering among the language sites. It was something like «Description of Greece» by Pausanias. Today the map is interpreted as an obligatory route where metaphor is leading us, being our social guide. At the same time with some vindictive pleasure it is noted that this map does not follow the logic.

Our idea of mapping provides us with fewer social freedoms than it was believed once. It is true that we have the opportunity to leave the bus and to get on the next one which is exactly the same, very much like your sightseeing tour of London. But this choice, i.e. our ability to look at tropes with eyes of an analytic is almost never mentioned in the present day papers, though

this is exactly the way the writers of the papers see them. Meanwhile, some kinds of metaphors, for example, a metaphor with commentaries, for which in the Middle Ages there was a special term «antapodoizs» stimulate a conscious attitude to the trope, stimulate, if anything, its dismantling. There are also different markers that define the degree of conditionality of the trope and the measure of its unconscious perception. In the theatre we emotionally watch drama, but do not forget where we are, and do not run out on stage.

Hyperbole and metaphor. Context-oriented and context-forming tropes

Up to «cognitive turn» theory of figures which has already left the ground of rhetoric was under the strong influence of view on art, adopted in the era of romanticism. Attention was drawn primarily to the capacity of the artist to create new worlds. Original metaphors were valued. A metaphor which became a language fact would be called «frozen» and «dead». The discovery of the social role of the trope, its effect on the social behavior of people, on the contrary, has emphasized the metaphor, which went down to the language, the one that is consistently present in the language world picture. It is clear that the role of occasional («live») metaphors in the language world picture is insignificant, while they remain occasional. This role is small in the cultural construction of rhetoric. In the light of what has been said the tropes which are of special interest for us are the ones which in their nature are predisposed to creation of cultural context and, correspondingly, are closely connected with context of culture, i.e. play a role in the creation of mental maps.

These tropes are allegory as a kind of metaphor and hyperbole which is close to it. Both tropes are widely used in everyday speech, and on the frequency of use hyperbole immediately follows the metaphor [Kreuz, 1996, p. 91]. Both tropes actively gravitate to the formation of idioms. Hyperbole is usually determined through exaggeration and metaphor through similarity (allegory – is an extended metaphor), something which does not clarify the ability of these tropes to interact with the cultural context and obscures their common nature.

Let's turn to rhetorical background of hyperbole.

Hyperbole as a trope and hyperbole as the curve of the second order have something in common – both are associated with the transition through the limit. Quintilian [Quintilian 8.6.67] defines hyperbole as «an elegant surpassing of the truth» [1909, p. 140]. The meaning of transition and even transfer is inherent in the very etymology of the word «hyperbole». If we talk about the curve, the branches of the hyperbola are not touching each other, being separated by the coordinate axes, serving as asymptotes for them, that is, the lines to which they strive, without ever reaching them. If we talk about the trope, originally hyperbole was understood as unattainable similarity by likening a certain feature with the object-reference carrier of this feature. So, Demetrius Falernian [Demetrius, 2.125] says: «In fact, hyperbole indicates something which is impossible in reality – in truth is there anything that

can be whiter than snow or faster than the wind?!» [1978, p. 258]. Aristotle's hyperbole is to argue with the beauty of Aphrodite, or try to surpass Athena in art work. Further on the hyperbole was usually illustrated by such cases - surpassing all the known limits of whiteness, beauty, speed, skill and other. Thus, hyperbole, and its opposite trope – meiosis – reflected the world of symbols adopted in culture for the maximum (in meiosis – minimum) displays of the feature. It was a world of unique, reference objects, the nature of which is easy to understand, if we turn to the trope of antonomasia.

Antonomasia – understood as “the use of a proper name in the meaning of a common noun” is metaphorical in its nature. Often, but not always, and in varying degrees it involves exaggeration. When we compare an ambitious man with Napoleon, and the jealous – with Othello, there is in the first place, likening, and secondly, exaggeration (in varying degrees, depending on the case) and, thirdly, the reference to the precedent: Napoleon – the standard of ambition, Othello (contrary to the assurances of literary critics) – jealousy. An interesting argument about hyperbole-antonomasia «rich as Croesus» can be found in the «General Rhetoric» of group μ : «In principle it is a hyperbole, but the fortune of a billionaire may well be compared with the fortune of the last king of Lydia» [Obschaya..., 2006, p. 208]. Croesus as a cultural standard of wealth is relevant for the present. Actually the same can be said of hyperbole «faster than the wind», and many others.

Mythology, fables and folklore - serve as a sort of museum or data bank of hyperbole and allegories. Today the table of weights and measures is added to them. Allegory in fables, if we understood allegory as unfolded metaphor, has the ability not only to unfold, but also to fold. Fox is an allegory (a metaphor) for a cunning man. In fable contexts this allegory is unfolded into a whole story (parable), where the fox interacts with other characters, for example, with the crow. If we call our friend a fox, we mean those contexts which «the fox» has acquired in fables and fairy tales. If you ask the question which might seem strange at first glance, whether the similarity of our acquaintance with a fox is a hyperbole, the answer will require more than simple reasoning. On the one hand, if we call the hypocrite a Tartuffe (antonomasia), exaggeration does not seem so deliberate, as compared to calling a friend a fox, likening him or her to a creature of a different morphology. On the other hand, if we take Tartuffe as the point of reference, we have a hyperbole in front of us and the comparison with a fox, in which guile and hypocrisy are highlighted, most people will confidently call a metaphor. We have to note one curious thing. It is believed that metaphor illustrates something less clear using something more clear [Lakoff, 1992], although the world of fable standards convinces us otherwise. We know much less about foxes than we know about people. Here an effect of flattening or depletion of meaning takes place: metaphors from fables are more handy because of their conventionality. These arguments are stated in S.A. Megentesov's paper [Megentesov, 1993]. They help us understand how standard hyperbole works. So, how do we distinguish metaphor from hyperbole? If we start from the marked position of hyperbole and its cultural role, it is obvious that

there is an indication of the maximum / minimum present in it. Intuitively, it seems that this exhausts the nature of hyperbole. However let's pose the question which is so obvious for a metaphor: how do two domains interact in hyperbole and metaphor? Does a hyperbole take us to a different frame, imperceptibly shaping our thoughts, as a metaphor, in the opinion of the absolute majority of researchers who have experienced the charm of Lakoff and Johnson's book does?

Let's take an example from the work specially devoted to the distinction of metaphor and hyperbole.

1. «The sea boils» in the meaning of «seething».
2. «The sea boils» in the meaning of «reaches a high temperature».

In the first case we compare the movement of water with its behavior during boiling, the question of ultimacy is irrelevant. It is important to see that one denotation («image») overlaps the other with the isolation of their common trait, as was shown in the beginning of the last century by the school of A.F. Potebnya and graphically illustrated as overlapping Eulerian circles. The common part of the circles (domains) – is an actualized sign. The water in the sea is compared to the other water - in a teapot. The common feature – the way the water moves.

In the second case, the maximum temperature of water is a stress point, after which it enters a different state of aggregation. What does, however, happen to denotations (domains, images, tenor and vehicle, etc.)? If boiling is not taken into account, we have the same, but not some other water, but water of higher temperature. It is not boiling in the kettle, but boils in the sea. As in metonymy, we are dealing with a homogeneous rather than heterogeneous object.

Let's emphasize this with other examples. «Hold on a second», or «I have not seen you in a hundred years» – expressions relating to time, that is not just a homogeneous, but the same object. If it were not for the underlined reference to standards, we could call it a metonymy, especially the kind which is called synecdoche (quantitative metonymy). We usually say in Russian: народ в аудитории (the folk is in audience). We qualify it as a synecdoche, although the difference with the case of «wait a second» is reduced only to the accentuated reference to a short period of time, taken as a reference.

Hyperbole is functionally similar to the prototype. But, if the prototype defines a class through its typical representative, hyperbole, through its boundary, top or bottom. Sometimes hyperbole almost merges with the prototype. A second is a prototype for a very short time period. And a second is a hyperbole (or meiosis) to refer to time since we do not use microseconds in everyday speech. All of this brings hyperbole closer to the tropes of metonymical rather than metaphorical group, where family resemblance is crucial.

Aristotle considered metaphor to be a folded comparison. «Water is like glass» in a folded form can exist as a genitive metaphor of «water glass». If «like» is replaced by «almost», we'll obtain the operator of a hyperbole conversion into comparison analogue: «I have not seen you for almost a hundred

years». «Almost» indicates the direction, «like» indicates the comparison. In his argument about the two kinds of examples, Aristotle speaks of the parabola and the paradigm, i.e. of the metaphor which is unfolded into a fictional narrative and of an unfabled example or sample. In this sense, the metaphor and hyperbole will relate to the very same two types: focus on imagining a new object and focus on a heterogeneous sample.

But among ordinary metaphors one can identify the ones which in a given culture got deposited in memory as a kind of samples (parabolas-paradigms). This is what is called an allegory and was given a special definition by Quintilian (in contrast to Tryphon's earlier broader understanding of allegory as any kind of circumlocution) and has played a key role in medieval culture. Those beams of metaphors that Lakoff is considering, for example, «love is a journey» [Lakoff, 1992], are precisely such allegories, they are closely associated with specific languages and sometimes trans-language cultures, such as, say, Christian culture. Among the samples a special sample class called the maxima and minima should be highlighted – these are hyperboles (a special kind of paradigm). The close connection with the cultural context allows to combine metaphors-allegories and hyperboles into the same group, but the factor of homogeneity / heterogeneity separates them. Antonomasia illustrated the presence of both groups very well. The cultural context in it is self-evident. Most of antonomasia tends to hyperboles, and some – to metaphors-allegories.

Allocation of this group among the tropes is important for understanding of the essence of mapping and how is the social weight of the trope split between its cognitive and communicative function between tools for speech production and tools for understanding reality.

Metaphor, allegory and hyperbole serve cultural construction equally well. They turn everyday language into a more delicate instrument. Their role in speech production is equally significant. These are convenient tools that perform a function for producing speech, similar to that of common places. As far as the recipient is concerned it is easy for him or her to recognize both metaphor and hyperbole, based on linguistic and encyclopedic information: «Rather, the processes for understanding metaphorical uses are exactly the same as those deployed for all other word uses, that is, they are relevance-seeking processes of forming and testing interpretive hypothesis in their order of accessibility, taking as premises the most highly activated items of encyclopedic information, deriving implications from them, and stopping once expectations of relevance are satisfied» [Carston and Wearing, 2011]. However, the same paper rightly emphasizes the difference between the metaphor, on the one hand, and the hyperbole, irony and other “loose uses”, on the other, and a more significant role of figurative meaning in the metaphor is stated. Paradox of the hyperbole lies in the fact that it is dealing with a homogeneous object, but it has less connection with it, than a metaphor, which deals with a heterogeneous subject, actively interacting with the direct meaning. Geometric curve of a hyperbole is in the position, where

its axes are not tangents but are asymptotes. Metaphor is always portrayed as geometrically overlapping circles.

As for the impact of the hyperbole on our thoughts, here in comparison with the metaphor the moment of conditionality is considerably strengthened and, in spite of all the finality of hyperbole, and perhaps because of it, it just tends to conscious perception. The matter is that the hyperbole, like irony, is a marker of conventions and extends an invitation to be perceived consciously. It is no coincidence that since the ancient times to the present day in the definition of hyperbole there is a warning against taking it literally, the warning absent in the definition of metaphor. Cf.: «not intended to be understood literally» [Lanham, 1968, p. 56]. Gibbs sees hyperbole as a form of irony, along with the rhetorical question [Gibbs, 1994: 15].

As for the metaphors, the marker of conventions is present only in some of its forms, such as antapodosis (Byzantine rhetoric term, describing a parabola with a term-by-term commentary, as in the Gospel parable of the sower) and genitive metaphor which is close to comparison such as «ice of distrust», «water glass», etc. In other cases, the marker is defined by genres and styles. It is known to be present in poetic speech, which sets us on a metaphorical wave and allows to notice the metaphors and to admire them. It can also occur in rhetoric, but rather as a warning. When we say, «he said, flowery speech», we warn the listener not to perceive metaphors unconsciously, but rather tune him or her to critical, analytical thinking.

Simple repetition of metaphors (as in the case of a political metaphor in particularly intrusive campaigns and endlessly repeated metaphors of commercial advertising) contributes to dismantling of metaphors. In totalitarian rhetoric, as mentioned above, the very involvement of the general public in the propaganda through a system which included the local press and presentations at meetings led to the dismantling of metaphors and appearance of jokes ridiculing them. These anecdotes highlighted the contradiction between the direct meaning of the metaphor and reality. For hyperbole such a contradiction is inherent in the very nature of the trope.

Hyperbole stands as a test in relation to the metaphor and other tropes, helping to separate the role of language thinking development in communicative civilization from the role of language myth-creation, the latter makes us follow the metaphor uncontrollably.

Conclusions

The social weight of the trope is determined by two respectively related things: by the active development of language as a means of communication and as a result - a tool of thinking (1), and the passive perception of language as a means of thinking and as a consequence of language-dependent behavior (2).

The first, without receiving any deep understanding, was developed by the practice of ancient rhetoric, where, firstly, the phenomenon of figure (the trope) was legitimized and this expanded the possibilities of language and thought, and secondly, the samples (paradigms) of figures (tropes) usage were fixed.

The second has received a deep theoretical understanding lately, but needs to be adjusted, since the «power of language» is exaggerated and focused primarily on the negative: manipulation or errors generated by the language itself.

In between these two understandings there exists a point of view that tropes are purely external way of speech embellishment, that they are artistic tools, although sometimes used outside of fiction in rhetoric and much less frequently in everyday speech. The focus of such understanding, which goes back to the romantics of the first third of the nineteenth century, is occasional tropes. In general, this approach underestimates the importance of the trope as a social phenomenon.

Hyperbole by the fact of its very existence makes us think about the differences and closeness of the first and second approaches. Closeness lies in the recognition of the social value of the trope. The difference lies in the answer to the question posed in the title, do we «live» by hyperboles as we «live» by metaphors? The answer, which follows from our reasoning, is as follows.

We «live» by hyperboles in meaning 1, but do not «live» by them in meaning 2. It seems that we do not «live» by many metaphors (in meaning 2): some by their nature, containing, like hyperbole, an indication of a deliberate convention, the other because of the genre and situational markers of the same convention. The first approach, claiming the social role of the trope in the rhetorical sense is primary and invariant, the second, claiming the social role of the trope in the sense accepted today, is secondary and optional, although its value can not be overestimated.

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Hyperboles We Live by [?]

The article treats the phenomenon of hyperbole as a test which allows, on the one hand, to see the weakness of the cognitive approach adopted today for the study of the trope, on the other hand, the strengths of rhetorical view of the trope. The idea that rhetoric tropes were mere embellishments of speech is challenged. The role of tropes in cultivation of language and communicative space is underlined. Metaphor and hyperbole are seen as tropes which, are most closely connected with the cultural context and language conventions. The connection between these tropes is demonstrated by the example of antonomasia. From a rhetorical point of view both metaphors and hyperboles set cultural standards. The paradox of hyperbole is that when dealing with a homogeneous object, at the same time it does not enter into an active interaction with it (with a certain maximum or minimum), while the metaphor when dealing with heterogeneous entity actively interacts with the domain involved, which is reflected in the cognitive approach. Consequently, in the hyperbole the role of unconsciously perceived social guide is reduced, while the role of reference, helping us to build communication is strengthened. A marker of conventionality is contained in the very nature of hyperbole. In metaphor we see the opposite picture. However, in the metaphor there are markers of conventionality (in some of its forms or contexts), and this makes its social role similar to the social role of hyperbole. Both rhetorical and cognitive approaches recognize the social role of the trope. But the rhetorical approach, focused on the development of communicative space is invariant with respect to the tropes and contexts of their use. After decline of rhetoric the cognitive approach, focused on the mapping of mental space, and restored trope's social role. The approach has a varying degree of relevance for different tropes and their contexts.

Key words: *metaphor, hyperbole, cognitive approach, rhetorical approach*

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