The study of figurativeness as a specific feature of symbols (based on the German language material)

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Abstract

The proposed research is dedicated to the study of German symbols, which are one of the means of verbalization of culturally important information and the way of conceptualizing extralinguistic reality. The thesis highlights the philosophical understanding of the term *symbol* and stages of its development in linguistics. The central goal of the work is to investigate the figurative aspects of German symbols. Within the framework of the research, *symbol* has been defined as a conventional language sign, with the semantics formed on the basis of associative rethinking of direct, indirect and connotative meanings of the word and motivated by the social function of the denoted word. Figurativeness has been defined as the main feature of symbols. It compares them to allegory, metaphor and metonymy. Differences and similarities between these concepts have been found, the establishment of criteria distinguishing *symbol* from other figurative lexemes has been carried out.

Key words: symbol, figurativeness, allegory, metaphor, metonymy

Introduction

The current level of development of linguistics is characterized by the usage of an interdisciplinary approach to the study of linguistic phenomena. The symbol is organically connected with the culture, language, and consciousness, it preserves and transmits cultural information. It is known to be phonetic, semantic and grammatical properties of language signs, differing from them in the presence of sems, that reflect the ethnomental identity of the society. The study of etymology of the word *symbol*, one of a multi-valued and used concepts of science, was engaged by linguists from many countries in different periods: W. Kroll (1919), W. Mueri (1931), M. Schlesinger (1967), F. Creuzer (1973), D. Huelst (1999) etc.

The word “symbol” comes from Greek σύμβολον (*sýmbolon*). Studying the etymology of the term, scientists have singled out its root *bal* and prefix *σύμ-*, which was borrowed from Sanskrit *gal*. Its main meaning was connected with the noise of the water when it flows or drops. It can be compared with de. *gell* – a sharp sound, scream, de. *gellen* – shrill, de. *quellen* – beat a fountain, eng. *bell* – a bell is a device that makes a ringing sound, ukr. *galas* (галаc), rus. *galdet* (гальдетъ) – the sound of many voices.

The prefix *σύμ-* meant association, communication, simultaneity, complicity. Therefore, according to W. Kroll, the Greek word *symbolon* (plural *symbola*), is the name of various places: the merger of one river to another, combining mountain ranges. The antonym to the word *symbolon* was the Greek word διαβάλλω (*diabolos*), which meant the enemy, the one who destroys everything and stands in the way of unification (Kroll 1919): eng. *diabolic(al)*, de. *diabolisch*, ukr. *dyiavol* (диявол), rus. *dyavol* (дьявол), pol. *diabel*, it. *diabolicità*

The first written mention of the word *symbolon* was recorded in the works of Homer and elegies of Theognis of Megara. Since then, other ancient Greek poets, writers, historians and orators began to use the word. From ancient Greek, symbol was borrowed by Latin literature: *Plautus*, *Terentius*, *Cicero*, *Pliny*, *Helium*

(Schlesinger, 1967). Subsequently, the word *symbol* in different phonetic and orthographic variants penetrated to other languages of the world:

symbol - English, German, Czech, Polish, Slovenian,

symbole - French,

simbolo – Spanish, Italian, Portuguese

simbol – Slovak, Croatian, Indonesian,

simbool – Dutch, Afrikaans,

simbolis – Lithuanian,

sembol – Turkish,

symbol – Macedonian,

symvol (символ) – Ukrainian,

simvol (символ) – Russian.

M. Schlesinger connected the meaning of the word *symbolon* with *weave*. He justified this by saying that the ancient Greeks knew how to skillfully weave together the vine, straw, fibre, hair. This work was called *symbollein* (σύμβολlein), and the product, respectively – *symbolon* (σύμβολον). Therefore, the ancient meaning of the word “symbol” is to bring together and interweave different parts into the whole (Schlesinger 1967).

Other scientists (Kroll 1919; Mueri 1931; Huelst 1999 et. al.) came to the conclusion that “the manifestation of hospitality and friendship” – is the oldest and most commonly used of its meanings. In ancient Greece it was common to accept and treat foreigners without asking their name and origin, then the host and the guest began to exchange tablets or other gifts in memory of each other. The particles were kept in the families and even passed as legacy. By meeting, the friends compiled the particles together, demonstrating their friendship and hospitality, demonstrating, that in their houses they would always find some shelter and protection. However, the word *symbolon* meant not the act or process of connecting of the broken parts, but the preliminary agreement between friends.

Under the influence of mysticism, a new interpretation of the word *symbolon* appeared – *code, password*. The members of the mysterious organization invented symbol-words, phrases or even sentences, which served as passwords. Understanding these words was the sign of belonging to a particular order. The symbol had sacral meaning at that time: it was connected with magical, miraculous power used in magical rituals (Morris, 1975).

From the XII century symbols in Europe became widely used in art, literature, architecture, heraldry. In the XVII century scientists studied the symbols identifying them with emblems; under the emblem they understood a text or a picture message. In the XVIII century the term *symbol* acquired the semantics of spirituality and was qualified as the highest essence, the intuitive unification of the spiritual and the sensual, ideas and content, form and expression, something that was impossible to describe and understand. In XIX-XX centuries the symbol was justified from the point of view of logics, culture, psychology, and psychoanalysis as a result, the books of Ernst Cassirer “Philosophy of symbolic forms”, Sigmund Freud “The Interpretation of Dreams”, Carl Jung “Archetypes and Symbols” and others were published.

In the last third of the XX century *symbol* became the object of study of linguistics. At that time the scientists paid their attention to the study of sound symbolism and phonosemantics. There was an opinion, that sounds can express connotative and denotative meanings. For example, according to M. Lurker (1979): *A* is the symbol of fatherhood, dominance, and power, *U* – motherhood, birth or night, *O* – something high and deep, *E* – cleanliness and elevation, *I* – family and life.

In modern linguistics, there can be mentioned several approaches to the study of symbols: semiotics, cognitive linguistics, and linguoculturology. Semiotics considers symbol as the kind of a sign, an intermediate element of verbal and non-verbal texts of culture. The language signs are relatively stable parts of the semiotic process, data, the truth of which does not require the verification. Symbols can be compared to theatrical images, the meaning of which everyone understands in his own way (Selivanova, 2012). The language sign and symbol perform different functions: the sign indicates, informs about something, that is connected with some temporal and spatial characteristics, and the symbol reflects and denotes objects and phenomena of reality, which often can not be directly perceived, but only understood by means of associative and abstract thinking.

The main task of cognitive linguistics is to study the relationship between thinking and cognition, storing and transforming information about the concept. The concept is “a basic cultural cell in the mental world of a man” (Stepanov 2007: 248), it is a discrete unit of the collective consciousness, which is stored in the national memory of native speakers in verbally determinate form (Dillon 2000). Concept and symbol are mental structures that represent universal knowledge about the worldview of a certain linguistic community and are the ways of conceptualizing and categorizing of extra-linguistic reality, but these concepts are not identical. According to V. Karasik (2002), I. Serebrianska (2008) and O. Eliseeva (2008), Y. Stepanov (2007), the concept is broader than a symbol, because the symbolic component can be a part of the concept.

E. Kubryakova (2004) names the symbolic component “a boundary” of the concept, which is always present in its structure as an element included by culture and is realized in certain moments of communication. Mental formations with axiological semantics, which are characterized by a combination of concept and symbol, are called by M. Schwarz (2008) and A. Prykhodko (2008) as symbolic concepts or conceptual symbols. The intermediate position of the symbol between the linguistic sign and the concept indicates its linguocultural specificity.

Linguoculturology defines the symbol as the basic unit of culture; a representant of mental information and reflection of the peculiarities of the national, linguistic consciousness. The symbol is one of the ways of conceptualizing and structuring the reality. Symbols are some ‘repeaters’ of historically significant meanings, archetypal images; they convey the meaning of the word considering its use in national cultural contexts and are the basis for the formation of the national consciousness of the people in general, and of each individual in particular.

The definition of a *symbol* in linguistics

Based on the comparative analysis of dictionary definitions in German, Ukrainian, Russian and English dictionaries it has been found out that in most cases *symbol* means:

1) a sign (object or effect) with a deep meaning; a figurative sign for a certain concept or process that doesn't always have the visible and clear relationship with the phenomenon it represents (for example *blue flower as a symbol of Romanticism*); something that presents or stands for something else, especially a material object representing something abstract;

2) a letter, figure, or other character or mark or a combination of letters or the like used to designate something;

3) a statement of belief, especially of a religious nature; it refers to the Nicene Creed or Apostles' Creed in particular or to credo (Ozhegov & Shvedova, 1997; Yaremenko & Slipushko 1998; Duden, 1999; Longman, 2001; Pearsall, 2001).

The symbol is something that represents another object on the basis of certain agreements or associations; a material object, which represents an abstract phenomenon. Each ethnocultural community has its own symbols. The incorrect interpretation of symbols can disrupt international communication and lead to conflicts: even in the related Indo-European languages, there are isomorphic and allomorphic symbolical meanings of colors, animals or plants. Almost in all languages *ram* is associated with *stubbornness*, *ox* – with a *hard-working person*, *wolf* – with *insatiability*, *sheep* – with *humility* (Kochergan 2004).

However, for example, a *pig* in the German community is a symbol of:

- 1) dirt and untidiness: *Dreckschwein* ‘dirty pig’, *Schweinekram* ‘smut,’
- 2) wealth and fertility: *Sparschwein* ‘piggybank’,
- 3) happiness: *Glücksschwein* ‘lucky pig’, *Schwein haben* ‘to have a stroke of luck,’ while in China this animal symbolizes male power, and for Jews and Muslims it represents something unholy and sinful (Biedermann, 1994).

Symbols can be defined as associative complexes fixed in people’s minds, that exist in the language meaning of a word as “a symbolic aura”: a set of cultural stereotypical semes. The actualization of symbols involves autostereotyping, ethnic evaluation, identification by the speakers. Accordingly, the symbols are units of language that reflect the modern ethno-linguistic picture of the world society. The semantics of symbols is determined by cultural, economic, social and political spheres of national life.

Methods and materials

The material of the study consists of 195 symbols of German, collected by means of the study of monolingual and bilingual dictionaries, dictionaries, of symbols such as Biedermann, 1994; Brockhaus, 1984; Dornseiff, 1965; Duden, 1999; Heinz-Mohr, 1979; Klappenbach & Steinitz, 1970-1978; Kuepper, 1971; Lurker, 1979, 1992, 1983, 1982; Wahrig, 1975, 1986/1991; Wehrle & Eggers, 1967.

For the search and study of practical material, the following linguistic methods have been used: the method of induction, description, component analysis of dictionary definitions and lexical-semantic analysis. The paper applied the principle of thematic classification of symbols; the interpretation of symbols includes linguistic, folklore, culturological and historical interpretation. The systemic and quantitative characteristics of the collected material were aimed at obtaining objective data.

The thematic principle in the study of German symbols is based on extralinguistic criteria. This approach made it possible to establish two general classes of symbols according to belonging of their denote to a certain class of concepts: subject or non-subject. To the subject, symbols belong lexemes, the initial meaning of which is connected with the living and inanimate phenomena of the person’s surrounding reality. Non-objective symbols reflect spatial and procedural relations. Depending on the initial meaning of German words-symbols 13 thematic groups were established.

Most of the German symbols refer to the phenomena of **nature, flora, and fauna**:

- a) animal symbols or faunonyms (20%): *der Affe* – *Symbol (S.) der Dummheit und der Nachahmungssuch* ‘monkey – symbol (s.) of stupidity and imitation’, *der Bock* – *S. des Trotzes*, ‘buck – s. of the defiance’ *die Gazelle* – *S. der Armut*, ‘gazelle – s. of grace’;
- b) floristic symbols and dendronym-symbols (10%): *die Lilie* – *S. der Unschuld, der Reinheit*, ‘lily – s. of innocence, purity’, *der Lorbeer* – *S. des Ruhmes*, ‘bay laurel – s. of fame’, *die Espe* – *S. der Feigheit, Furcht*, ‘aspens – s. of cowardice, fear’, *der Ölweig* – *S. des Friedens*, ‘oil branch – s. of peace’.

c) ornithonym-symbols (7%): *die Elster* – *S. der Schwatzhaftigkeit*, ‘magpie – s. of garrulity’, *der Pfau* – *S. der Eitelkeit, des Stolzes*, ‘peacock – s. of vanity, pride’;

The set of symbols to represent **atmospheric phenomena** turned to be less numerous (4%): *der Dunst* – *S. der Nichtigkeit* ‘haze – s. of nothingness’, *der Nebel* – *S. der Verschleierung, Trübung, Unklarheit* ‘mist– s. of deception, obscurity, uncertainty’.

The same concerns geographical features (3%): *der Berg* – *S. für große Arbeiten* ‘mountain – s. of hard work’, *der Fels* – *S. der Festlichkeit, der Härte* ‘rock – s. of festivity, hardness’.

During the study of linguistic symbols were singled out a group of words denoting **minerals and metals** (7%): *das Eisen* – *S. der Härte* ‘iron – s. of the hardness’, *der Kristall* – *S. der Klarheit und Durchsichtigkeit* ‘crystal – s. of clarity and transparency’.

One of the largest group of symbols is formed by words denoting **artifacts** (19%):

- instruments and tools: *die Beißzange* – *S. der Zänkischkeit* ‘pincers – s. of squabbling, *die Nadel* – *S. der Kleinheit* ‘needle – s. of littleness’;
- weapons: *der Schild* – *S. des Schutzes* ‘shield – s. of protection’, *das Schwert* – *S. des Krieges* ‘sword – s. of war’;
- shoes: *der Kothurn* – *S. erhabener Stile* ‘buskin – s. of sublime styles’, *der Pantoffel* – *S. des Regiments der Ehefrau* ‘wife’s slippers – s. of governance’;
- musical instruments, toys: *die Leier* – *S. für ständig Wiederholtes* ‘lyre – s. of continually repeated action’, *das Kaleidoskop* – *S. wechselnder Eindrücke* ‘kaleidoscope – s. of changing impressions’, *die Puppe* – *S. der Unselbständigkeit* ‘doll – s. of dependence’

Special thematic group is formed by words denoting **architectural constructions** (3%): *die Burg* – *S. für feste Zuflucht* ‘castle – s. of firmly refuge’, *der Damm* – *S. der Abspernung* ‘dam – s. the barrier’, *die Mauer* – *S. der Festigkeit* ‘wall – s. of strength’.

The basis for creating symbols can also be the names of **dishes and drinks** (4%): *der Honig* – *S. der Süßigkeit* ‘honey – s. sweetness’, *der Pfeffer* – *S. für Schärfe* ‘pepper – s. of sharpness’, *der Saft* – *S. der Kraft* ‘juice – s. of potency’.

Words denoting different **parts of body** and **internal organs** of the human (6%) possess symbolic meaning as well: *das Haar* – *S. der Freiheit und der Dünne* ‘hair – s. of freedom and fineness’, *die Hand* – *S. für Macht, Hilfe* ‘hand – s. of power, help’, *der Kopf* – *S. der Vernunft* ‘head – s. of common sense’.

The same concerns **anthroponomys** (2%): *die Jungfrau* ‘virgin’, *der Hunne* ‘hun’, *der Vater* ‘father’, *die Mutter* ‘mother’.

The **numbers** with symbolic meaning include: *der Null* – *S. der Nichtigkeit, Bedeutungslosigkeit* ‘zero – s. of nothingness, meaninglessness’, *die Tausend* – *S. für Mehrheit* ‘thousand – s. of the majority’. The symbols can also be the **letters** (1%): and a lot of **colours** (2%): *das A* – *S. des Anfangs* ‘A – s. of beginning’, *grau* – *S. der Unbestimmtheit* ‘gray – s. of indeterminateness’, *grün* – *S. des Unreifes* ‘green – s. of greenness’.

Among 195 symbols is formed another group of words denoting some **process or phenomenon** (11%):

der Biss – *S. für stechenden Schmerz* ‘bite – s. of sharp pain’, *die Asche* – *S. für Zerstörtes, Ausgeglühtes* ‘ash – s. of destroying, fire’, *der Schweiß* – *S. schwerer Arbeit* ‘sweat – s. hard work’.

The study of thematic groups of symbols indicates that they reflect the relationship of man with the phenomena of nature, animals and plants, created objects and architectural structures. The precondition for the formation of the symbolic meaning of these words are the features, properties, functions of the phenomena and objects they denote. The objects of symbolization are emotions, feelings, appearance, character traits of the speakers, their activities and some physical quantities.

Figurativeness – as the main feature of symbols

The semantic structure of symbols is characterized by duality: the accumulation of lexical, contextual and extralinguistic meanings. For example, in order to decode the symbolic meaning of the word *das Lamm* 'lamb' it is necessary to understand its direct meaning: *junges Schaf im ersten Lebensjahr* 'young sheep in the first year'. It is the first plan of the semantic duality. On the basis of concrete seme some associations appear, and they form the image *Unschuld* 'innocence' (the second plan is superimposed on the first and becomes dominant in the interpretation of the symbolic meaning of the mentioned above lexeme). Accordingly, in the semantic structure of word-symbols there takes place the process of deactualization of the concrete seme as a result of actualization of a certain abstract seme or of induce of an additional seme. The direct and symbolic meanings in the semantic structure of the word-symbol are equal.

In linguistics the ability of language units denoting concrete things to express abstract concepts and phenomena of reality, and vice versa, to represent concrete things through other abstract or concrete concepts is called figurativeness (Potebnia 1914). Figurative lexemes are indirect nominations, in the semantic structure of which there are the object-conceptual and associative-figurative plans (Yurina 2004).

We can define several models of transposition, where direct meaning is denoted as *significate* (S), and figurative, i.e., symbolic – *referent* (R):

- 1) CS (concrete significate) → AR (abstract referent) – the direct meaning is object-conceptual, and the figurative meaning denotes abstract concepts;
- 2) CS (concrete significate) → CR (concrete referent) – the direct and the figurative meanings denote concrete objects of reality;
- 3) AS (abstract significate) → CR (concrete referent) – on the basis of direct abstract meaning concrete symbolic meaning can be formed;
- 4) AS (abstract significate) → AR (abstract referent) – the direct and the figurative meanings are of abstract character.

The main types of transposition, which are updated in the formation of word-symbols are:

1. The transfer from the concrete to the abstract CS–AR:

der Berg – *große Arbeiten* 'mountain – hard work',

das Ferkel – *Schmutzigkeit* 'piglet – dirtiness',

die Espe – *Feigheit, Furcht* 'aspen – cowardice'

The actualization of this kind of transposition shows that in German there are some lexemes with a significate denoting the concrete denotatum and, at the same time, implicating some abstract figures.

2. The transfer from the concrete to the concrete CS–CR:

das Feuer 'fire' – *Licht* 'light,'

der Herd 'stove' – *Heim* 'home,'

der Hecht 'pike' – *Frauenheld* 'women hero.'

According to the study of different types of transposition it can be argued, that the dominant model is the forming of the abstract symbolic meaning on the basis

of direct concrete significate and of the transfer from one concrete meaning to another concrete meaning. So figurativeness is an important structural-semantic feature of symbols. S. S. Averintsev defined the symbol as follows:

the symbol is an image, that is taken in the aspect of its signature, it is a sign, endowed with all ambiguity of the image ... The material image and the substantial contents exist in its structure as two poles, inconceivable without each other (Averintsev, 1985).

The figurative aspect of the symbols compares them with allegory, metaphor, and metonymy. It is necessary to define the differences and similarities of these concepts and to establish criteria that distinguish the symbol from other literary figures.

Symbol and allegory

Allegory and symbol have a common feature: through a concrete image, they denote the abstract one. However, the difference between these concepts is in the ways how they reflect this abstract image. The basis for the formation of symbols are concrete objects and phenomena of reality: a plant, an animal, an artifact, sometimes the man himself, as well as processes of social life. In contrast to a symbol, the main point of allegory is an abstract concept, for the expression of which specific language features are used.

Therefore, A. Potebnia, (1914) saying that “the fantastic figure is created or taken only for meaning” and A. Veselovsky (1979) called allegory “artificially chosen image.” Allegory can’t be understood directly, without violating the pragmatic maxim. The words with symbolic semantics can also be used in their direct meaning, and they don’t harm the process of communication: word-allegory *die Nachteule* ‘night owl’ doesn’t denote some kind of owls, it is a playful name: *jemand, der gerne bis spät in die Nacht hinein aufbleibt* ‘someone who likes to stay up late at night’, and also *Polizist auf Nachtstreife; Nachtwächter* ‘policeman on night duty; night watchman’. The word-symbol *die Eule* indicates an owl and at the same time can have some multiple figurative meanings:

- **Weißheit und Gelehrsamkeit** – *klug wie eine Eule sein* ‘whiteness and scholarship – wise as an owl’;
- **Hässlichkeit, Verdrießlichkeit** – *sie sieht aus wie eine Eule (hässlich)* ‘ugliness, grumpiness – it looks like an owl (looks ugly)’;
- **Tod** – *Wenn eine Eule ruft, dann stirbt jemand*
- ‘death – ‘when an owl calls, someone dies’.

The image of an owl with a book became a symbol of science and knowledge. “An owl of Minerva” is well known as a symbol of knowledge, wisdom, perspicacity and erudition. In this example, symbol is often associated with personification. We can compare the image of the goddess Themis, a woman with a blindfold, scales in her hand, who has become a common symbol of justice. Symbol really has features of personalization: it shows human qualities through plant and animal worlds. However, if a symbol is equated to personification, it is necessary to limit the number of symbols to only those words that relate to a human.

Symbol is a means of expression which causes various associations, develops fantasy and imagination. It is used to express an idea that can’t be definitely interpreted, and it is a polysemantic concept. Allegory is often a semantic centre of a completed story and illustrates some specific idea.

The presence of the distinguishing features between the symbol and the allegory gives reason to suggest that these concepts are not identical. But it is of no use to deny the fact that in certain contexts (especially in fairy tales and fables about

animals) these concepts can be similar. In such cases, we can speak of a symbolic allegory or allegorical symbol.

Symbol and metaphor

The prerequisite for the identification of metaphor and symbol is their emotional-evaluative function and the property to transfer the meaning of one object to another on the basis of similarity of their internal and external features. The common ground of metaphor and symbol is an image – “the source of the main semiotic concepts” (Arutyunova, 1990).

Metaphorical images are limited and definitely defined. The symbol transforms certain objects and phenomena of reality into ideas and then into images. This idea remains elusive in its interpretation. The transfer of the image to metaphor has the semantic specificity, and the transfer of the image to symbol is connected with extra-linguistic factors.

When we talk about the understanding of the metaphoric meaning, the major role is played by encyclopedic knowledge. The interpretation of the semantics of symbols is based on social-cultural knowledge about history, tradition, moral-ethical values of some linguistic society. For example, the understanding of the phraseologism *leben wie Hund und Katze* ‘to live like dog and cat’ is based on our knowledge about the reaction of a dog and a cat to the presence of each other. Therefore, we interpret this statement as “enmity with each other”. However, to decode the meaning of the following phraseologism: *die Katze im Sack kaufen* ‘to buy a cat in a sack’ and *leben wie ein Hund* ‘to live like a dog’ the information about the physiological properties of these animals isn’t enough. It is necessary to use our ethno-cultural knowledge: in German society a cat is a symbol of something hidden, false, and the dog, in this case, refers to the low-grade, low-cost.

The other distinctive feature of symbols and metaphors is also connected with their functioning in phraseologisms: *symbol* is an independent linguistic sign, which reflects certain abstract objects and phenomena of reality, so in phraseologism it can be replaced by the notion it symbolizes: *ein gutes Brot haben* ‘to have a good bread’, that is ‘to live in welfare, to earn a lot of money’. In this phraseologism the word *Brot* can be replaced by *Gehalt* ‘salary’ or *Wohlstand* ‘prosperity’. But such replacement can’t be made in the phraseologisms with metaphor such as:

- 1) *Hunde, die bellen, beißen nicht* ‘dogs, which bark, don’t bite’

‘The one pronounces terrible threats, will not realize them’;

- 2) *das ist für die Katze* ‘this is for a cat’

‘do something unsuccessfully, vainly’;

- 3) *jemandem die Butter vom Brot nehmen* ‘to take away butter from one’s bread’ (to rob someone of an important thing).

In these examples (1,2,3), the words *dog*, *cat*, *bread* can’t be replaced by other words. The main distinctive feature of symbol as a paradigmatic unit from metaphor lies in the peculiarities of their content structures: the metaphor has a three-part structure: *object₁ – feature, characteristic – object₂*, and the symbol has a three-part structure: *object₁ – feature, characteristic*. For example, in the semantic structure of the word *Löwe* ‘lion’ metaphor and symbol are combined:

- 1) *katzenartiges Raubtier* ‘cat-like predator’;

- 2) *ein kräftiger und kühner Mensch* ‘a strong and courageous man’;

- 3) *Sinnbild der Kraft und Kühnheit* ‘symbol of the power and courage’.

The paradigmatic structure of the word *lion* as a metaphor is presented by tree components:

katzenartiges Raubtier → *kräftig, kühn* → *Mensch*
'cat-like predator → strong and courageous → human'.

The paradigmatic structure of the word *lion* as a symbol is presented by two components, among which there is an associative motivated connection – from concrete to abstract, i.e. from the object to the feature:

katzenartiges Raubtier → *S. der Kräfte und Kühnheit*
'cat-like predator → symbol of the power and courage'.

Metaphor denotes characteristics and properties of a particular object, but doesn't express it in abstract form as symbol does: the word *der Berg* as a metaphor is a subject that dominates the other, or a creature of great growth; *der Berg* as a symbol denotes the greatness as a characteristic, as a feature, as a whole.

In contrast to a symbol, the metaphor is based on the transfer of meaning from one object to another, and the word-symbol – on the association between the sign and the concept it designates. A metaphorical image is always emotional, and a symbolic one can be characterized as rational and logical. Therefore, metaphor and a symbol have different functionality. Symbol performs representative function without valuation of the designated subject, and metaphor with nominative function has some stylistic meaning and function of evaluation. Consider the examples of word-symbols:

der Elefant – *S. der Ungeschicktheit, Plumpheit*, 'elephant – s. of clumsiness, ungainliness',

die Espe – *S. der Feigheit, Furcht* 'aspens – s. of cowardice, fear'

They denote abstract characteristics, and the metaphor *das Schwein* 'pig' contains an evaluation seme: *eine schmutzige, unanständige Person* 'a dirty, indecent person'.

In the text, the metaphor is used to provide stylistic colouring. The symbol has a well-established meaning which is formed as a result of frequent use, it refers to a specific concept, it doesn't evaluate, but constates this phenomenon.

Symbol and metonymy

The grounds of metonymic transposition are the transfer of one object or a group of objects to another object or a group of objects on the basis of contiguity. Metonymy is used by the author to enhance the visual perception of the work, as a means of indirect characteristics of the phenomenon: *j-m ein Glas trinken lassen* (*j-m etwas trinken erlauben*) 'to allow somebody to drink a glass (to allow somebody to drink something)', where the word *Glas* doesn't denote a container made from glass, which somebody can drink from, but it denotes some drink, *j-n mit dem Eisen bezwingen*. (*j-n mit irdendeiner Waffe bezwingen*) 'to threate somebody with the iron' (to threate somebody with a weapon made of iron), where the word *Eisen* doesn't denote the material, which the weapons can be made of, but the weapon itself.

At the same time, these words can be symbols, but with a different semantic content: *das Eisen* – *S. der Härte* 'iron – s. of hardness' *das Glas* – *Zerbrechlichkeit* 'glass – brittleness'.

It is necessary to point out the fact that there are a number of symbols which can be formed on the basis of metonymical transposition of meanings:

der Augapfel – *S. des Wertes, des Kostbaren*, 'eyeball – s. of the value, the treasure'
etw. wie seinen Augapfel hüten, 'to guard sth. like the eyeball (like gold, life itself)'

die Galle – *S. für Ärger, schlechte Laune* 'gall – s. of anger, bad mood'

Gift und Galle speien 'to spew poison and gall (to be in a rage)'

Honig im Mund– *Galle im Herzen* 'a honey tongue, a heart of gall'

Despite the existence of common features among *symbol* and *metonymy*, these concepts cannot be identified as the same things, because *symbol* differs from *metonymy* in its semantic content and broader functionality: *symbol* in contradistinction to *metonymy* doesn't "swallow" the archisem of the main meaning and doesn't "slack" it, as it is in *metaphor* (Shelestyuk, 1997). In the semantic structure of *symbol*, the process of assembly-combination of meanings takes place.

Conclusion

Due to the results of the study of a figurative aspect of German symbols, we may conclude that *symbol* is a motivated verbal sign, which represents not only denotation, but also the remote, abstract referent, and its direct and indirect meanings are united by a common designation. The word-symbols differ from other figurative language units in the depth of the image they represent. *Symbol* is characterized by the combination of abstract and concrete meanings, and this transposition is of associative-motivated character. However, the correlation of symbolic and allegorical, symbolic and metaphorical, symbolic and metonymical may vary depending on the specific conditions of their realization. In certain contexts symbols resemble *metaphor* or *metonymy*, so we can talk about the existence of **symbolic-metaphorical** language units: *Sie arbeitet wie eine Ameise* 'she works like an ant', where the word *Ameise* 'ant' has the symbolic meanings *Fleiß* 'diligence', *Arbeitsamkeit* 'industriousness', which is realized in the metaphorical unit in this sentence; and **symbolic-metonymical** language units: *Sie ist eine Beißzange* (d.h. zänkische Frau) 'She is a pincers (i.e. shrew)', where the symbolic meaning of the word *Beißzange* 'pincers' – *Zänkischkeit* 'cantankerousness' is represented in the metonymical unit.

Thus, the *symbol* should be considered to be a language unit (not speech) where different varieties of symbols are realized. Symbols are of a national-cultural character and cannot be understood without the background knowledge about the culture, history, and customs of the language community where these word-symbols exist.

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