On the Poetic Function of Language

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0. In order to define poetic function of language one should first define precisely the concept of poetic language. However, prior to this it is necessary to establish the definition of language and its primary function. Language presents a system of different language signs (phonetic, morphological, syntactic and lexical) which are all in mutually defining and complementary relations. It is a product of a language community and from this fact its basic function of a communication instrument derives. In order to be able to function as a means of communication language must have certain elements which are common to all members of the language community. In the course of its use a language can be realized in different ways. As a result of one of these realizations the poetic language is generated. It does not represent only the use of the poetic language in poetry and rhymed verses but also its use in all kinds of literary texts. Consequently the poetic language is understood as a poetic modelling of language material. This is why the poetic function of language is language-expression oriented: it focuses on language form and structure.

1. Basing his philosophy of language on the results of phonology which relies in its analysis on the considerations of the communitaction functions of language, Karl Buhler has worked out three basic functions of language: emotional (or expressive), conotational and referential (Bühler: 1993, 19-90). However, as it has been showen later by Roman Jacobson this triadic system of language functions does not exhaust all the aspects of language. He has pointed out that in every act of language communication three more factors take part so that three more functions aree added: phatic, metalinguistic and poetic (Jacobson: 1966, 285-324). Each of these six functions can be expressed either in an ordinary way or its expression can be that characteristic of literary-poetic fiction and poetry. According to Novica Petković 'The description of all functions, however, has

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not been completed immediately – rather one function at a time has been articulated and defined (the job in which both linguists and literary theoreticians have participated and in which the part of modern poetry has been considerable)' (Петковић: 1995, 9). The poetry from the beginning of the 20th century has thus, by its new means of expression, pointed to the fact that referential meaning can be denied[1]. It is probably because of that that Roman Jacobson, talking about poetic function of language, has pointed out that: 'Concentration on the message[2] as such and focusing on the message for its own sake – that is the poetic function of language' (Jacobson: 1966, 294). Such interpretation of the poetic function of language is nothing but an attempt to deny referential meaning and to direct the essence of all language communication towards acting by means of speech. At the time when this definition of the poetic function of language was put forward the very concept of the poetic language had not yet been precisely defined and pinpointing of its characteristics was in many cases insufficiently clear. The concept of 'poetic language' comes from the time when literature was referred to as poetry or poetic art. It was not used to refer to the use of natural language in poetry only but to refer to the use of language in all kinds of literary texts. Today the poetic language is defined as a 'specific organization of speech sequence which is experienced and appreciated as the artistic modelling of language material' (Петковић: 1995, 104). Such definition of the poetic language means that there is a need for additional segmentation and organization of the language sequence, variation of the syntactic order, interweaving of language units, connecting of different semantic categories, frequent use of the tropes, the

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1   There have been such sporadic attempts before. As an example we give the following quotation from Aristophanes' comedies.
(...)
Брзо на клик слетите ми амо
Триото, триото, тотобрикс!
Ви, у долу што до бара давит занате
Комарце љуте, ви, по росним мјестим'
По убавој ливади на Маратону.
(...)
Све на договор дед дођ'те!
Амо, амо! Амо, амо!
Торотороторототорикс!
Киккабау, кикибау!
Торотороторото, лилиликс!
(...)   (Birds).

2   Jacobson's statement that the poetic function of language is 'directed towards the message' is not clear enough and it is not precise either. Lotman's statement that the poetic function of language is manifested as the 'information on the code' (Lotman: 1970, 261) is closer to the truth.

use of certain number of grammatical constructions, words and twists, violation of language norms on all levels.

2. Of the six functions of language, the referential and poetic are at the end of the scale while the emotional, conotational, phatic and metalinguistic, conditionally speaking fill the space between these two functions. That this is so is shown by the very direction of the referential and poetic function. The referetial ('denotational', 'cognitive') function is directed towards the language expression of the very 'object', which 'serves the function of communicating what the statement is really about, thought expression, thinking and the intellect' (Lešić: 1979, 123); poetic function, on the other hand is language-expression oriented (focusing on the language form and structure). Jacobson's differentiation of the six aspects and functions of language does not mean a real decomposition of language into its functional constituent parts; rather, it has to do with linguistic abstraction and generalization. None of the individual languge functions has an independent existence – rather, they constitute a complex functional whole in which, in the course of communication by means of natural language, some of them are brought to focus and other functions are supressed. Having all this in mind, it is understandable why it is necessary in the study of the poetic function of language to go beyond the boundaries of poetry into the domain of all areas of language activity because the poetic function is not an exclusive characteristic of poetry and poetic expression).

3. Since the poetic function of language is of primary importance for a literary piece one should bear in mind that there is the conceptual difference between 'the language of a literary work and literary style' (Lešić: 1979, 30). The first concept refers to the very nature of language which is used in literary works (a lyrical poem, a novel or a play) i.e. in the works of certain artistic value which have different structure but which are given the characteristic of conceptually the same context by the nature of artistic creation. The second concept refers to every particular use of language structure (in a philosophical, political, moral, memoire context) where its characteristics are identical or similar. This distinction has been rightly pointed out by Charles Bally. He realized that the language of a literary piece could not be treated in the same way as the language in other uses and especially in colloquial speech so that he excluded it altogether from his esearch (Bally: 1951, 19). Bally drew the attention to one important intention of a literary author so that it differs from everyday language not so much in its form as in its function. This opened the possibility for other researchers to view the means of language expression in a literary work not in the context of linguistic but artistic purposes. This paved the way to the more complex understanding

of the poetic function of language. In this way the researchers came to realize that the means of language expression in a literary work had to be analysed with respect to their esthetic effect within the context in which they appear. Jan Mukarzovski was one of the first to draw the attention to the esthetic side of languge expression. He, however, did not pay attention to the esthetic side of language only but to the esthetics in general singleing out the three aspects: function, norm and value.

When he stayed within the general domain of language, Mukarzovski used to point out that 'the esthetic side of a language is to be looked for in all kinds of language manifestations and not only where it prevails (namely in poetry) and, the other way round, neither in the poetry must the researcher gloss over all the nuances of the communicative function and their importance for the poetic construction' (Mukaržovski: 1986, 9). In this way the concept of information which is used in esthetics theory can be treated as the esthetic information which acquires informational content to the degree in which the esthetic symbols and their combinations are successfully reduced to signs which exist in reality. Information as such means nothing more than the means of measuring order. It refers to particular distribution (unusual, original) which is most frequently to be found in poetry. The measure of order expresses structural characteristics of a literary (poetic) piece representing a kind of negation of the enthropy (disorder). As a consequence of this every poetic work, as an esthetic activity, takes the shape of a creative process which is governed by the principles of individualization and differentiation (Bense: 1978, 43).

4. Availing itself of all previous experience acquired in the process of studying language structures contemporary linguistics has come to realize that in some language expressions there is an increasing orientation towards the form of the expression, towards its formal quality which results in the fact that the language structure is particularly emphasized[3]. Orientation towards the organiza-

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3 As an illustration of this we shall quote four lines from the poem: Samson and Dalila by Лаза Костић:

У тамници је сужањ, окован,

у тамници је глава народа,

у тамници је снага народа

у тамници је нада народа

(Костић, Л. Поемс, 1909, 250)

In the quoted verses the language function is directed towards the 'information code' i.e. the form and structure of the language phrase. That it is so, it is enough to note that out of twenty lexemes that have been used only five are not repeated. This means that the poet tried to shrink referential meaning so that the formal aspect of the phrase can bear the biggest quantity of information.

tion of language expression for its own sake, as it is well-known, Roman Jacobson called the poetic function of language. However, every kind of poetic expression is not exclusively the property of poetry but also of any form of human language expression. It is logical, however, that the form of a poetic expression (along other forms such as: commercial, political, religious etc.) is reflected to its utmost in poetry (where by defiition the poetic function dominates over other language functions which are also present). This shows that one has to be very careful not to equate the poetic function of language and the language of poetry. This was expressed in its exaggerated form by Benedeto Croce who said that 'at every moment of his speech a man talks like a poet because he, like the poet, finds the way to express his impressions and feelings; (Kroce: 1934, 35). The tendency towards the realization of the poetic function of language 'is not the intention only of a poet but also of all those who wish to talk and write well. This is a characteristic 'not only of literature creation but of a literary style as well' (Lešić: 1979, 35). The difference pointed out by Jacobson, which is due to the shift of emphasis and not to the change of quality, remains: 'Poetic function is not the only function of language art but only its dominant, defining function; in all other language activities, contrary to this, it acts like a subsidiary and marginal constituent' (Jacobson: 1966, 294). Variability of the poetic function o language is equally important for all the aspects of human language communication and for the various forms of literary art. This is why Jacobson, and rightly so, points out that 'every attempt to reduce poetic function to the sphere of poetry or restricting of the poetry to the poetic function would represent a dubious and deceptive simplification' (Jakobson: 1966, 294). This shows that within the language of a literary work there is the distinction which points to two different styles or to two different ways of the use of language within the scope of the art of literature creation. One of them is characteristic for poetry which is characterized with the richess of tropes, sound and intonational figures, rhythmical and melodious organization of language material – this maximizes the orientation towards the very form of language structure which thus acquires a prominent poetic function. The other style is a characteristic of the literary fiction pieces which are characterized by the noticeable lack of tropes and literary figures as well as by the absence of other 'embelishments' In this way such works approximate everyday language where the poetic function gives way to the referential and message-bringing function of language. Therefore, it can be rightly stated that the type of the language structures used in poetry are poetically organized since the language of real poetry 'presents its subject on more than one level because one and the same expression has more than one function in the structure of

meaning pattern of which it is a part' (Nowottny: 1965, 2). That which is important for the nature of different literary works is not less important for all different types of language organization. It is the matter only of a relationship between strictly poetical and strictly referential in a language; in other words, it is the relationship between the pure form and pure message which is established on both qualitative and quantitative level. This is why there is a considerable typological difference between their language structures. This difference is quite evident in the domain of various literary artistic creations but there, quite the opposite to what we have in the domains of all other language activities, the result of a creative act (where the facts turn into artefacts and the evidence into creative masterpiece) includes a poetic function which varies in its intensity.

5. Every member of the language community who takes part in oral or written communication has at his disposal different kinds of language structure (grammatical forms, lexical units, syntactic constructions etc.) which can be used according to the rules of the general language usage or according to the rules of poetic art. Whether it is the case of the general (popular) or idiosyncratic (complex) form of poetic expression depends on the very way in which the language is used. However, even when using the language poetically and with the esthetic purpose in mind, the poet who is actually modelling the poetic expression and its content is obliged to respect certain general language rules and literary conventions so that the communication between the poet (encoder) and the decoder (reader or listener) can be established. Therefore, the poet must bear in his mind that when he creates his piece of poetic work it should be 'well-organized, finished and rounded-up structure which has been formed on the principles of coexistence, interrelations, correlations and the dynamic coherence of strictly defined means and elements of the poetic expression' (Виноградов: 1963, 131). The relation between two end-point language functions – referential and poetic can be thus undestood as the fact that all that goes beyond communicative, referential form of language belongs to the realm of the poetic language and it becomes the subject of the poetic function of language. This means that all stylistic forms like emphasis, rhythm, euphony, symetry, synonymy, evocative and affective quality of the expression, all expressive language means and all formal language inventory are included into the structure of the poetic function. In this way, the concept of the 'poetic' approximates the concept of 'style' and becomes even identical with it. Roman Jacobson was inclined to make such equation. He, however, treated the subject in reverse order and he called stylistics poetics: 'Poetics predominantly deals with the question 'What makes a language message a piece of art?' As the main subject of poetics is diffe-

rentia specifica of the language art compared to other kinds of art and other kinds of language activities, poetics takes the leading position in literature studies' (Jacobson: 1966, 286). Victor Vinogradov was almost of the same opinion stating that literary stylistics and poetics had the same object of study (Виноградов: 1963, 79). For Zdenko Lešić it became obvious 'that literary stylistics and poetics want very much to identify themselves with the literary criticism; (Lešić: 1979, 69). All this points to the fact that both poetics and stylistics exemplify the poetic function of language.

6. All statements that have been presented so far, although very much different from each other, agree in that poetic language (language of poetry) is a specific functional structure in which poetic function prevails so that it is different from all other functional registers. They also agree that not a single language manifestation is restricted to one language function only, rather besides one basic (primary) function there are other side (secondary) functions which make up functional whole of a particular language act. However, what is particularly important is the degree in which different language functions make use of the language components at their disposal i.e. what is the degree of the realization of the complete inventory of the elements which constitute the system of the natural language. Although in the case of the poetic use of the language major part of the language potential is activated only a small number of language components are elevated to the level of poetic effect (this number varies depending on the very structure of the poetic (artistic) work. In order to understand the poetic function of language better, one has to bear in mind two important facts: firstly, what a poetic work (poem or a piece of fiction) represents and secondly what is the purpose of poetic creation.

(1) A poetic work is a complex but indivisible poetic and esthetic structure whose constituent elements (overtly expressed and covert) and their mutual relationships all become its constituent parts. It exists as a complex, unigue and regular phenomenon. All this contributes to the fact that, when considered from a formal point of view, a poetic work is qualitatively different from any other communicative language act.

(2) The effort to create a language poetic work from both systematized and unsystematized language material so that it establishes the communication relationship between the encoder and decoder transferring complex and various information is the aim of all poetic creation.

In certain periods of time, when we look at it diachronically, the poets used natural language as a medium of artistic creation but they tried to deny referential meaning. It happened in the period of Cubism and Futurism in Russia. The

poets experimented with the irrational language devoid of its representational meaning[4]. They thought that the language which goes beyond rational is a protoform of poetry and that the works written in such language can realize 'universal poetic language' (Волков: 1970, 430-438). Something similar happened again in the period of Lettrism. Namely, when organizing the verses phonically, some poets used the fact that the lexical units have some specific sound realization. The Lettristic poetry emerged from such principles. This style began in 1947 and is related to the name of the French poet Isidor Izo[5] (Vuletić: 1976, 89-118).

4   We present a few verses which illustrate the 'beyond-rational' poetry.
    (...)
    Дверь Собачка
    Свежие маки Поэт
    Расцелую Младенчество лет
    Пышет Удар
    Закат Нож
    Мальчим Ток
    (...)   (Крученых, Садок судей).

    (...)
    О, рассмейтесь, смехачи!
    О, засмейтесь, смехачи!
    Что смеются смехами, что смеянствуют смеяльно,
    О, засмейтесь, усмеяльно!
    О, рассмешищ надсмеяльных –
    *   смех усмейных смехачей*
    (...)   (Хлебников В., Заклятие смехом).

5   Let us see what form a part of Izu's Lettristic poem has:
    (...)
    gagada haha
    gagada haha
    gaha gaha
    17! pstzoukânân
    pstzoukânân
        tzântzâ
    âsnâtza âsnâtza
        âsnâtza gântzâ
    pstoupâganne
    pstoupâganne
    pstoupâgâhaha
    pstoupâgâhaha
    (...)   (The poem for driving away sorrow)

Purely Lettristic poems[6] consist of the sound segments which do not have particular meaning and there is no text as such either. They insisted only on the sound realization of words. Although only quasilexical meaningless elements were created they, however, became meaningful, xpressively strong and beautiful within the context of a poem. The ultimate achievement of the Lettristic poetry was that they pointed out that there was a possibility of uniting poetry and music in one indivisible sonorous art to which some proponents of Lettrism gave a theoretical name: Hyperphonism. Beside those two attempts to avoid the conceptual in a language, one has to bear in mind that there are certain forms of folk art: fables, chants, nursery rhymes in particular[7], as well as some religious rituals.

6   To our knowledge, very few contemporary Serbian poets used the elements of Lettrism. One of them was Мирољуб Тодоровић.

(...)
без авизе
агентују и агирају
агарцима авољајући
аврљ – баврљ

        (Avrlj – bavrlj from the collection Gejak glanca guljarke, 1974);

        and Миодраг Шуваковић

(...)
једи магбеттрули леди магбет сећање леди магбет
ништа повратак малим кућама вешалима данас је
први јули 1973 проглашавам га за пети јули крај
митова уа
уау
уаузз

        (R.O.N.S from the journal Koraci, 11, vol 11, nos 1-2, 1976, p. 48)

7   We present few examples of the folk forms. The chant to drive away toothacke:
Свако јутро добро јутро,
Свако вече добро вече,
Ал' да тебе не затече –
Мајка Божја тако рече:
У кам сињи нек утече
У камен, у пламен, у стрмен

        (*Српски етнографски зборник*, бр, 1, 1934, 40)

A humorous poem with counting :
О Илија, Илија,
Пошто ти је кирија? –
За два гроша и динар,
И за царски гулдинар

        (Миодраговић Ј., *Народна педагогија у Срба*, 340)

A tongue-twister :
Црн јарац црном трну врх гризе;
не гризи ми, црни јарче, црном трну, црн врх!

7. Poetic language (and that means first and foremost the poetic (verse) structuring of the speech sequence based upon continual parallelism (Hopkins: 1953, 13) has to be structurally and semanticaly organized in this way so that it should simultaneously be able to convey, by means of poetic language communication, the following: (1) the information concerning meaning and (2) formal linguistic information.

(1) Semantic information represents a process of poetic communication which follows from the comminication properties of a poetic work and which conveys such content (topic, basic meaning, the essence of the message) which can be compared to some part of reality or some extralinguistic situation (Novikov: 1983, 129). Semantic information is realized (a) as phatic information which informs the encoder on the facts, acts and processes which have happened or will happen in a real or imaginary world (Гальперин: 1981, 27) and (b) as conceptual information which points to the relation between the author and the facts described on the level of factual reality (Степанов: 1985, 87-90).

2) Formal linguistic information consists of three basic information layers: a) autoinformation, dealing with the form per se, b) pragmatic information – dealing with the participants in the process of communication and c) communicative information – dealing with the communication process as a whole. The autoinformation consists of (1) structural linguistic information (dealing with the form, its phonetic, phonological, morphological, lexical, semantic, syntactic and textual organization), (2) standard linguistic information (dealing with the structure of the form and its complience with the language norm), (3) stylistic information (dealing with the stylistic potential of the structure), (4) style information (dealing with the structure as a kind of a style) and (5) esthetic information (dealing with the form as the output of the esthetic process (Tošović: 1988, 102-103).

In the poetic language which is fully exploited in literary texts the esthetic information is predominant (Гончаренко: 1988, 10); it is a complex information structure which deals with the process of poetic communication. A few kinds of information can be differentiated: (a) personal esthetic information, which is the outcome of an immediate realization of form and content, (b) catharsis information which is the outcome of the conflict relations between the elements of a poetic text, (c) hedonistic information which is the pleasure-effect of the string of

Црн јарац, црн трн, црн брсти трн

(...)(Миодраговић J., *Народна педагогија у Срба*, 274)

On the form and structure of these folk forms see further in the monograph: Etimologija i male folklorne forme (Sikimi}: 1996).

word signals upon the participants in the poetic communication process, (d) axiological information which is directed towards the evaluation-appreciation moral and esthetic judgements of the reader, (e) suggestion-hypnotic information which acts upon the irrational side of the reader, (f) structural-formal information which points to the stylistic quality of a poetic work and (g) functional-formal information which brings out concrete communicative functions of the constituent elements of its basic structure.

8. Finally, if everything that has been said so far and everything else which has not been included in the scope of this article is taken into account, then we can come up with the following conclusion. Poetic function of language means that, firstly, all constituent elements of a natural language have to become active so that the language could become an effective means of creation of authentic and unique works of art and secondly, that the natural language should be transformed into a specific means of communication which will convey, via specific structural and esthetic organization, a very complex and multi-layered message. To put it simply: poetic function of a language is a way of language use with the purpose of creating a work of art by means of words and conveying an unusual aspect of information.

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О поэтической функции языка

Соотношение двух конечных сторон языковой функции – *референциальной* и *поэтической* – можно объяснить лишь тем, что все то, что превосходит коммуникативный, референциальный аспект языка относится к области поэтического, становится объектом поэтической функции языка. Иначе говоря, все стилеобразующие формы (такие, как эмфаза, ритм, эвфония, симметрия, синонимика средств речевого высказывания, эвокативные и аффективные свойства высказывания, все экспрессивные языковые средства, все формальные ресурсы языка) включены в структуру поэтической функции. Таким образом понятие поэтического примыкает и даже приравняется к понятию стилевого.Чтобы лучше разобраться в понятии поэтической функции, необходимо учесть два значимых факта: во-первых, ответ на вопрос о том, что представляет собой поэтическое произведение (либо в стихотворной либо прозаической форме), а во-вторых, ответ на вопрос, какова цель поэтического творчества. (1) Поэтическое произведение представляет собой сложную, но цельную поэтическо-эстетическую структуру, составными звеньями которой становятся все ее компоненты (актуализированные и неактуализированные), включая их взаимоотношения. Оно проявляется как комплексный, уникальный и закономерный феномен. Будучи уникальным, поэтическое произведение является неповторимым и случайным, а будучи закономерным, оно претендует стать творением общеценным и устойчивым. Благодаря всему этому, поэтическое произведение качественно отличается и на формальном уровне от всех прочих коммуникативных проявлений. (2) Цель поэтического творчества заключается в попытке создать из систематизированного и несистематизированного языкового материала вербальное произведение искусства, способное своими содержанием и формой установить коммуникацию с реципиентом и, оказывая воздействие на него, передать весьма сложную и разнообразную информацию.