PRODUCTIVE COMMUNICATION SPEECH STYLE: “JOINT CREATIVITY” (CASE STUDY OF THE LITERARY BIOGRAPHY BY W. ISAACSON “STEVE JOBS: BIOGRAPHY”)

Abstract. The article presents the narrator’s communication intention, focused on effective and cooperative communication between him and the protagonist, on the one hand, and the participants of the literary biography, on the other hand. It is noted that the activity basis of “joint creativity” is grounded on parity conditions of communicators of the literary biography.

The critical and analytical review of scientific literature proves that traditionally in scientific circles the literary biography is studied on two levels – the biography of the writer and the description of the life path of a famous person, which is outlined by another person with reference to certain documentary confirmations, testimonies of other people, historical and socio-cultural illustrations of a particular era.

The attention is drawn to the classifications of the literary biography existing in linguistics and the attributive features of its genre model (plot, historical context, fiction, factuality, the presence of a narrator and, accordingly, various narrative algorithms, etc.). An obvious feature of the literary biography is the life story of a person, which is structured and described depending on who presents it – the subject or the object of the narrative.

The case study is the work of W. Isaacson “Steve Jobs: Biography”. It has been found that the literary biography of Steve Jobs is based on more than forty interviews with Steve himself and those who surrounded him throughout his life (about 100 people). Accordingly, the article clarifies the essence of the interview as a genre, the text of which belongs to the journalistic type of texts and has social communicative potential. However, the text of the literary biography, which is in the focus of our attention,
contains features of artistic and autobiographical types of discourses, although the productive communication style of speech remains priority. The latter is based on “attitude towards the other person as a value”. Such a value for the narrator is Steve Jobs himself as an inquisitive, creative, ingenious, sometimes whimsical individual, respect for which is shown through decentration and empathy.

**Keywords:** literary biography, interview, productive communication style, narrator, protagonist, communication competence, “joint creativity”, parity conditions of communication, decentration, empathy, image.

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**PRODUKTIVNYI KOMUNIKATIVNYI STIL MOWLLENIA: «SPILNA TVORCHIST»**
(NA MATERIALI LITERATURNOI BIOGRAFIY U. AYEKSOZNA “STEVE JOBS: BIOGRAPHY”)

**Анотація.** У статті презентовано комунікативну інтенцію наратора, зорієнтовану на ефективне та співдружне спілкування між ним та протагоністом, з одного боку, та учасниками літературної біографії, з іншого боку. Зазначається, що діяльнісна основа «спільної творчості» грунтується на паритетних умовах комунікантів літературної біографії.

Критико-аналітичний огляд наукової літератури доводить, що традиційно у наукових колах літературну біографію вивчають у двох площинах – біографія письменника та опис життєвого шляху відомої особистості, який окреслена іншою людиною з посиланням на певні документальні підтвердження, свідчення інших осіб, історичні та соціокультурні ілюстрації конкретної епохи.

Увагу звернено на існуючі в лінгвістиці класифікації літературної біографії та атрибутивні ознаки її жанрової моделі (сюжетність, історичний контекст, вигадка, фактологічність, наявність наратора та, відповідно, різноманітних наративних алгоритмів, тощо). Очевидною ознакою літературної біографії постає життєва історія людини, яка структурується та описується залежно від того, хто її презентує – суб’єкт чи об’єкт нарації.
Матеріалом дослідження постає робота У. Айзексона «Стів Джобс: біографія». З’ясовано, що літературна біографія Стіва Джобса базується на більше ніж сороку інтерв’ю з ним самим та тими, хто оточував його по життю (це близько 100 осіб). Відповідно, у статті з’ясовано сутність жанру інтерв’ю, текст якого належить до публіцистичного типу текстів та має соціальний комунікативний потенціал. Проте текст літературної біографії, що у фокусі нашої уваги, містить риси художнього та автобіографічного видів дискурсів, хоча пріоритетним залишається продуктивний комунікативний стиль мовлення, в основі якого лежить «ставлення до іншого як до цінності». Такою цінністю для наратора постає сам Стів Джобс як допитлива, креативна, геніальна, подекуди химерна індивідуальність, повага до якої виявляється через децентрацію та емпатію.

Ключові слова: літературна біографія, інтерв’ю, продуктивний комунікативний стиль, наратор, протагоніст, комунікативна компетентність, «спільна творчість», паритетні умови комунікації, децентрація, емпатія, образ.

Defining the problem and argumentation of the topicality of its consideration. There are growing appeals for studying biographical texts. The modern era is the time of biographical revitalization, when the past is understood, evaluated, compared with the present through the life and activities of famous or little-known figures who, thanks to their creative successes, have become symbols of certain historical periods, which represent turning points in the progress of nations and civilizations and the development of the economy, culture, education, science, etc. Due to the variety of autobiographical forms that appeared in the 20th century, it is rightly considered the century of biography, and this fully applies to the first decades of the 21st century [1, P. 26].

One of the major topics to be investigated in this field is the literary biography itself and the peculiarities of its communication style – the way the narrator and the protagonist communicate, whether it is an official or a friendly style, on the one hand, and what the set of the narrator’s intentions are, on the other hand.

Biography as a genre is placed in a specific historical context. This gives the biographical text the status of a monument of a certain era. The biographical genre is dynamic and diverse in content. The creative, moral, spiritual evolution of a person, his/her professional and public work can be its basis [1, P. 46].

It should be stated that among the genre products of the literary activity of a person with the world of emotions and feelings, the artistic
discourse stands out first of all. The study of linguistic means of expression of human communication behaviour is attractive as the true nature of human feelings and emotions, their power can be known through the linguistic form of their embodiment. Such clarifications are important both for understanding the ideological content of the artistic text and for understanding human psychology in general. In addition, the analysis of the linguistic means of transmitting the communication behaviour of the characters reflects the specificity of the author’s vision of the world of human communication actions, which may differ from the standard one, and therefore indicates the specificity of the author’s individual model of the world.

This remains an open problem in the area of the literary biography in general and in “Steve Jobs: Biography” in particular.

**Previous Research in the Area.** A series of recent studies has indicated that the biographical texts appeal the scientific interest of Ukrainian as well as foreign scholars. The vectors of their investigation are various: from the typology of such texts [2; 3] to the forms of the autobiographical discourse manifestation [4]. Special interest is paid to communication strategies. Ya. Bondarenko confirms that communication features are expressed in the ratio of verbal self-expression and self-assertion, communication strategies, means of argumentation and resolution of verbal conflicts [5].

The first systematic study on the biographical narratives was carried out in 2016 by Ya. Bystrov. He highlights that “biographical narrative is a story, a story or a fragment of a narrative text in which information about the life history of a biographical subject is focused on transferring of his/her life experience” [6, P. 259]. The scholar also introduces the term “biographical subject”. “The subject of the narrative can be both the author as the narrator, the narrator introduced by the author and the biographical character of the narration, which terminologically united by the concept of “biographical subject” [6, P. 259]. Ya. Bystrov affirms that “a biographical subject is an organizational construct of a narrative that represents the life experience of an individual experiencer” [6, P. 259].

Within modern humanitarian sciences, the concept of communication, communication support, speech interaction of the narrator and the protagonist are described by F. Batsevych [7], A. Bielova [8], T. Buialska [9; 10], A. Oliinyk [11], J. G. Delia, D. J. Gelia, B. J. O’Keefe, D. J. O’Keefe [12], etc.

L. Serdiichuk, for instance, believes that the autobiographical discourse in the communication aspect can be considered as a special type of interaction based on certain strategies and tactics for realizing the
communication intentions of the addressee. Strategies, tactics and linguistic means of their expression have a specific character and are implemented with the help of the whole system of linguistic units. Discourse participants choose certain linguistic means, guided by their own intentions, strategies for their implementation, features of the socio-cultural context, taking into account certain peculiarities of the autobiographical discourse [13].

One of the simplest ways of tackling this problem in the field of the literary biography is to present the communication intention of the narrator, focused on effective and friendly communication between him and the protagonist, on the one hand, and the participants of the literary biography, on the other hand. With this aim in mind, in this paper we intend to describe the essence of “joint creativity” grounded on communicators’ parity conditions.

Results and Discussion. The critical and analytical review of scientific literature proves that traditionally the literary biography is described in two meanings: 1) biography of the writer; 2) “biography of a famous historical person, written by another person, based on documents, testimonies and socio-cultural and historical facts of that time. Such works are characterized by a deep immersion in the spiritual world of the depicted person as well as a combination of fiction and guesses, but mostly to the extent that they do not distort exact historical facts” [14, P. 61].

For the current work, it is sufficient to point out that there are some classifications of the literary biography. According to its content, the literary biography can be complete or partial, purely factual or with reference to the creative heritage of the protagonist; content-semantic or formalized one. It is also recognized as canonical, real, alternative, fictitious (in line with the truthfulness of the reproduction of the protagonist’s image); subject-event or associative-psychological (in accordance with its composition). The attributive features of the genre model of the literary biography are the reconstruction of life collisions of a certain person against the background of the historical context, plot, the involvement of various narrative algorithms, the presence of fiction, documentary as well as the presence of the author (interpretation of the facts of the protagonist’s life based on the author’s worldview positions) [14, P. 61].

The accepted feature of the biographical prose is documentary, factual accuracy as a factor regulating the limits of the author’s fiction and giving the work a factual character. In addition, a key characteristic is that the person, the individual, is at the center of the research [15, P. 118].

A person’s life is a stream of episodes, events, memories that are structured in the process of narration. The design of such a story is created by
the narrator, the author of his own biography or the researcher of such a text. A person does not live the life so much as he/she himself/herself narrates, describes, embellishes or dramatizes, silences something or, on the contrary, emphasizes something. Therefore, a person’s life, his/her life writing becomes what the subject or object of the story imagines it to be [16, P. 156].

We have already stated that the literary biography of Steve Jobs “is based on more than forty interviews with Steve Jobs himself, as well as interviews with more than 100 members of his family, friends, contradictors, competitors and colleagues. Walter Isaacson has written the fascinating life story of the creative entrepreneur whose passion for excellence is defined by six lines: personal computers, animation, music, phones, tablet PCs, and digital publishing” [17, P. 330].

It should be noted that the interview can be defined as a secondary genre of mass communication, having a public character with elements of official or unofficial relations, depending on the nature of the relationship between the participants of the communication [18]. Moreover, the interview is a communicative, cognitive and mental formation, “a type of topical text published in the mass media and, as a rule, presented in a dialogic form. Such a formation has a clearly expressed communication organization and pragmatic potential as it is the result of the speech interaction of the journalist-interviewer and respondent (collective authors), aimed at transmitting, receiving or exchanging the information, to influence the public addressee being the ultimate goal” [19, P. 4].

The interview belongs to journalistic types of texts, and, accordingly, being focused on a mass addressee maximally, it reflects the social communication potential and pragmatics of such texts [19, P. 1].

In journalism, the interview is defined as a journalist’s verbal communication with one or more persons to obtain information and meet the informational needs of the society as recording the statements of certain persons on definite topics as well as information about the persons themselves [20, P. 64].

The choice of communication style depends on the psychological characteristics of the communicator (his/her emotionality, openness), his/her life experience and the moral culture of the society too. A person’s communication skills are manifested in the culture of his/her speech, the ability to avoid conflict due to the choice of an adequate form of communication behaviour. The style of communication behaviour or a combination of different styles indicate a person’s level of social adaptation and moral culture as well.

Communication competence implies the understanding of one’s own communication style and the ability to recognize the style of a
communication partner. The basis of a productive communication style is “attitude towards the other person as a self-sufficient value”. It implies the recognition of the communication partner as free and responsible; the respect for his/her right to be who he/she is; the desire for cooperation; the readiness to understand the other person, to recognize his/her uniqueness, the conscious desire to dialogue and cooperation. The communicators must strive for unity to achieve close or common goals, the main instrument of influence being the full agreement of both (several) communicators.

A productive style does not arise between people automatically. It is established, requiring significant psychological costs from the participants of communication. Moreover, it involves the possession of such mechanisms of mutual understanding as decentration, empathy, accuracy and clarity in the expression of needs, feelings and emotions [21].

Decentration is the psychological ability of getting closer to another person’s Self and looking at the world through his/her eyes. The mechanism of decentration is at the heart of empathy – understanding another person through emotional penetration into his/her inner world, feelings and thoughts. Being in a state of empathy means perceiving another person’s inner world accurately, preserving emotional and meaningful nuances, but at the same time not taking the position of “I = YOU” [22, P. 47]: “This is a book about the roller-coaster life and searingly intense personality of a creative entrepreneur” [23, P. 13].

Empathy is used to indicate the most important information for the speaker and thereby it emphasizes the person’s role while the information transmission [24]. Actually, empathy is realized in communication, when the speaker expresses what he/she feels and acts to be understood: “This is also, I hope, a book about innovation. At a time when the United States is seeking ways to sustain its innovative edge, and when societies around the world are trying to build creative digital-age economies, Jobs stands as the ultimate icon of inventiveness, imagination, and sustained innovation. He knew that the best way to create value in the twenty-first century was to connect creativity with technology, so he built a company where leaps of the imagination were combined with remarkable feats of engineering. He and his colleagues at Apple were able to think differently: They developed not merely modest product advances based on focus groups, but whole new devices and services that consumers did not yet know they needed” [23, P. 13]. Empathy cannot be replaced by advice, instruction, or questioning. The competence of the communicator is to feel when exactly empathy will be appropriate.

We note that the result of a large number of W. Isaacson’s interviews is reflected precisely in the literary biography, that is “a narrative modality
that inhabits the referential space likewise colonized by autobiography proper, but at the same time offers a patently enriched and treated, hence fictionalized, and metamorphotic, version of the life-story of the autofictionneur” [25].

When communicating with his characters, W. Isaacson undoubtedly aimed at effective communication, that is, to understand them correctly, to feel their intentions and to realize what each of them had in mind when referring to Steve Jobs, his personal and professional life.

Paying attention to the chronological and factual tone of the narrative, we can confidently assert mutual trust between the narrator and those he interviewed as the lack of trust could become an obstacle to the accuracy of the quantity and the quality of the transmitted information.

In addition, the narrator himself in the introduction under the heading “How This Book Came to Be” mentions a friendly and open relationship with Steve Jobs, who personally asked the author to write his biography. Moreover, every time Steve had a creative idea that needed to be discussed, he invited W. Isaacson to a friendly chat: “When he had something to pitch, such as a NeXT computer or Pixar movie, the beam of his charm would suddenly refocus on me, and he would take me to a sushi restaurant in Lower Manhattan to tell me that whatever he was touting was the best thing he had ever produced. I liked him” [23, P. 10].

This style of communication can be called “joint creativity” as parity conditions of communicators underlie such an interaction: a common goal (writing a biography) and mutual efforts to find certain solutions [21]: on the part of Steve Jobs, his colleagues, relatives and friends – to inform, and W. Isaacson’s task is to transform the interview materials into the text of the literary biography that would be appreciated by the reader.

In psychology, the following factors of successful communication are singled out such as: “reliability of the speaker; clarity of his/her messages; taking into account the feedback of being understood appropriately” [26].

Thus, we can confirm the first factor with the example of the narrator’s sharing with the reader of the book’s idea, his getting to know S. Jobs and the motives for writing the biography. So, in one of the talks, S. Jobs stated that he would not control the process of writing the biography as he believed that the book of the biographer should be his own book: “Jobs surprised me by readily acknowledging that he would have no control over it or even the right to see it in advance. “It’s your book,” he said. “I won’t even read it” [23, P. 11].

The comprehensibility of Steve Jobs’ messages to Walter Isaacson is verified by the fact that the narrator considers Steve to be a genius and puts him on the same level as B. Franklin and A. Einstein. In addition, S. Jobs’s
personal interest in writing his biography indicates a mutual understanding between him and the narrator: “I always thought of myself as a humanities person as a kid, but I liked electronics,” he said. “Then I read something that one of my heroes, Edwin Land of Polaroid, said about the importance of people who could stand at the intersection of humanities and sciences, and I decided that’s what I wanted to do.” It was as if he were suggesting themes for his biography (and in this instance, at least, the theme turned out to be valid). The creativity that can occur when a feel for both the humanities and the sciences combine in one strong personality was the topic that most interested me in my biographies of Franklin and Einstein, and I believe that it will be a key to creating innovative economies in the twenty-first century” [23, P. 11].

The degree of comprehension of W. Isaacson’s correct understanding S. Jobs can be illustrated by the example: having learned the biographer wanted to communicate with S. Jobs’s friends and enemies, he sank into a reverie firstly as he had offended many people in his life, but later he himself began to encourage everyone, even mistresses: “I knew that I would have to interview scores of people he had fired, abused, abandoned, or otherwise infuriated, and I feared he would not be comfortable with my getting them to talk. And indeed he did turn out to be skittish when word trickled back to him of people that I was interviewing. But after a couple of months, he began encouraging people to talk to me, even foes and former girlfriends” [23, P. 12].

Using the results of processing the actual material, we can conclude the reader-friendly tone of the narration is marked by words of an intimate register. W. Isaacson himself writes in the introduction to the literary biography: “During my two years of visits, he became increasingly intimate and revealing, though at times I witnessed what his veteran colleagues at Apple used to call his “reality distortion field” [23, P. 12].

The intimate tone of the story reflects the details of Steve Jobs’ character, his mental and psychological state, the peculiarities of his life, and various hobbies (positive as well negative). This narrative tone accumulates both the first-person narration (the protagonist and the narrator) and the third-person one (Steve’s colleagues, friends, enemies, etc.).

For example, one of Steve’s best friends, a fellow student at Reed University, his like-minded person, and later one of Apple’s first employees, recalls Steve’s fascination with spiritual practices, emphasizing that they became an integral part of his inner world: “Jobs’s engagement with Eastern spirituality, and especially Zen Buddhism, was not just some passing fancy or youthful dabbling. He embraced it with his typical intensity, and it became
deeply ingrained in his personality. “Steve is very much Zen,” said Kottke. “It was a deep influence. You see it in his whole approach of stark, minimalist aesthetics, intense focus” [23, P. 50].

The story of the desperate obsession with vegetarianism is presented by two types of narration: the first-person as well the third-person narration. W. Isaacson notes that it was Jobs’ interest in reading special literature that led to such a preference and, accordingly, changed his life in a certain way: “Another book that deeply influenced Jobs during his freshman year was Diet for a Small Planet by Frances Moore Lappé, which extolled the personal and planetary benefits of vegetarianism. “That’s when I swore off meat pretty much for good,” he recalled. But the book also reinforced his tendency to embrace extreme diets, which included purges, fasts, or eating only one or two foods, such as carrots or apples, for weeks on end” [23, P. 51].

While studying at Reed University, Steve did not want to attend all the classes as he considered them boring and uninteresting. He did not want to leave the university. The only thing he wanted was for his parents not to pay for the education that was of no use to him. The dean, Jack Dudman, allowed him to become a free listener, continue to stay in the dormitory, and, accordingly, not pay for tuition, considering Steve Jobs a very curious young man: “He had a very inquiring mind that was enormously attractive,” said the dean of students, Jack Dudman. “He refused to accept automatically received truths, and he wanted to examine everything himself.” Dudman allowed Jobs to audit classes and stay with friends in the dorms even after he stopped paying tuition” [23, P. 54].

Among the university subjects that attracted the young Steve was calligraphy, which later became iconic in finding a user-friendly interface for gadget users. This is how Steve Jobs himself referred to it, calling it exceptionally beautiful and artistically subtle: “I learned about serif and sans serif typefaces, about varying the amount of space between different letter combinations, about what makes great typography great. It was beautiful, historical, artistically subtle in a way that science can’t capture, and I found it fascinating” [23, P. 55].

W. Isaacson adds one more touch to Steve Jobs’ image as a talented design master and computer genius: “It was yet another example of Jobs consciously positioning himself at the intersection of the arts and technology. In all of his products, technology would be married to great design, elegance, human touches, and even romance. He would be in the fore of pushing friendly graphical user interfaces. The calligraphy course would become iconic in that regard” [23, P. 55].

The fact that Jobs was addicted to drugs becomes obvious to the reader when we get acquainted with the third chapter of the biography “The
dropout”. Here the reader knows that being a twelfth grader Steve began to use LSD, a hallucinogenic drug known in certain circles as “acid”. He also drugged Chrisanne Brennan, his girlfriend. Steve himself compared this passion to Bach’s music, emphasizing his listening to music a lot, on the one hand, having the best feeling in his life, on the other hand. To embody and convey such a thought W. Isaacson used the first-person narration, a comparative construction (I felt like the conductor of this symphony with Bach coming through the wheat) and adjectives in the zero and superlative degrees of comparison (great, the most wonderful feeling): “Jobs had begun to drop acid by then, and he turned Brennan on to it as well, in a wheat field just outside Sunnyvale. “It was great,” he recalled. “I had been listening to a lot of Bach. All of a sudden the wheat field was playing Bach. It was the most wonderful feeling of my life up to that point. I felt like the conductor of this symphony with Bach coming through the wheat” [23, P. 47].

Conclusions and perspectives. The main conclusion that can be drawn is that a productive communication style of speech involves the possession of such mechanisms of mutual understanding as decentering, empathy, accuracy and clarity in the expression of needs, feelings and emotions. “Joint creativity”, grounded on parity conditions of communicators, becomes a favorable basis for outlining certain features of the psychological, mental and moral portraits of Steve Jobs, among which one can single out curiosity, skillfulness, genius, quirkiness, passion, etc. These findings provide a potential mechanism for the description of conceptual content of the biographical narrative of the literary biography “Steve Jobs: Biography”, on the one hand, and the study of linguistic means representing the narrator and the protagonist as linguistic personalities, on the other hand. In future work, investigating the above issues might prove important.

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