ICONIC PHRASES AS LINGUAL AND CULTURAL MARKERS IN THE ENGLISH SCIENCE FICTION OF THE 21ST CENTURY

ІКОНІЧНІ ФРАЗИ ЯК ЛІНГВОКУЛЬТУРНІ МАРКЕРИ В АНГЛІЙСЬКОМОВНІЙ НАУКОВІЙ ФАНТАСТИЦІ XXI СТ.

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In this article, the authors attempt to perform an in-depth analysis of iconic phrases in science-fiction works on the basis of the literary discourse and modern cinema. It has been ascertained that the aforementioned syntactic structures have not become the object of close scrutiny of the linguists of the late 20th – early 21st centuries despite the popularity of science fiction. The semantic range and syntactic structure of these structures have to be clearly defined. There is also a need for ascertaining their origins according to their historical and cultural societal sources. The mechanism of coining these units in the science-fiction language matrix has been outlined using the continuous sampling method to locate a number of iconic phrases as a language material for the study. On the proper syntactic level, the located units have been classified into simple sentences, complex sentences (of various types), phrases, and complex syntactic units (hereinafter CSU) as a component of the work's "legend". The historical and cultural background of iconic phrases has been studied: the Bible, national mythologies, folklore, and philosophical works were the sources of these syntactic structures. The communicative and pragmatic potential of iconic phrases has been studied regarding their social and emotional references in the native Anglophone society with their subsequent, secondary semantisation in other languages. The study showed that as a result of their reappraisal, iconic phrases can change their pragmatic message and integrate in a certain language enriching the lexis of its speakers. The logical outcome of using iconic phrases in the English science fiction is their transformation into integral elements of the lingual culture, markers that help to trace the relation between the work and a specific language matrix. This study is an attempt to study the iconic phrases as lingual and cultural units in English science fiction. The influence of iconic phrases on other language matrices, their interrelations and mutual exchanges serve as the object for prospective in-depth studies.

Key words: iconicity, iconic phrase, lingual culture, lingual and cultural marker, science fiction, pragmatic potential, recipient.

У статті здійснено спробу ґрунтовного аналізу іконічних фраз у науково-фантастичних творах на базі художнього дискурсу й сучасного кінематографу. З'ясовано, що, незважаючи на значну популярність таких творів на етапі сьогодення, указані синтаксичні структури не стали об'єктом пильної уваги лінгвістів кінця XX – поч. XXI ст. Чіткого окреслення потребували їхній семантичний діапазон та синтаксична будова. Йшлося водночас про нагальну потребу встановити їхню ґенезу за історико-культурними джерелами суспільства. На матеріалі комплексу іконічних фраз, сформованих методом суцільної добірки, виявлено механізм утворення цих одиниць у мовній матриці наукової фантастики. На власне-синтаксичному рівні виокремлені одиниці покласифіковано на прості речення, складні речення (різних типів), фрази, ССЦ як компонент «легенди» твору. Досліджено історико-культурне тло формування іконічних фраз: у мовній матриці наукової фантастики джерелом утворення цих синтаксичних структур слугувала Біблія, народна міфологія й фольклор, твори філософського спрямування. Комунікативно-прагматичний потенціал іконічних фраз вивчено з опертям на їхній соціально-емоційний зв'язок у первинному англійськомовному соціумі з подальшою, вторинною, семантизацією в інших мовах. З'ясовано, що внаслідок переосмислення іконічні фрази можуть змінювати прагматичний посил та інтегруватися в лексичний фонд певної мови, поповнюючи словниковий запас її носіїв. Логічним наслідком функціювання іконічних фраз в англійськомовній науковій фантастиці вони трансформуються в невід'ємні елементи її лінгвокультури, маркери, за якими можливо чітко встановити належність того чи того твору саме цій мовній матриці. Запропонована розвідка є спробою дослідити іконічні фрази як лінгвокультурні одиниці на базі наукової фантастики англійською мовою. Уплив іконічних фраз на матриці інших мов та їхній взаємовплив і взаємообмін є предметом перспективних ґрунтовних студій.

Ключові слова: іконічність, іконічна фраза, лінгвокультура, лінгвокультурний маркер, наукова фантастика, прагматичний потенціал, реципієнт.

Introduction. The early 21st century is marked by an increased interest in the genre combining scientific achievements with the literary invention that allows to reconsider the previous experience of interaction with the planet and space as well as to predict the prospective academic studies.

Some syntactic structures from literary works and cinema arise special interest and admiration of recipients as those structures are easy to memorise and reproduce in speech. Such units (word combinations, separate sentences, or paragraphs) resonate with the internal, primarily psychoemotional, state of the speaker serving as a response to their internal, non-verbalized questions, a reference to their fears or expectations, certain life events, forming a stable emotional connection which facilitates the further integration of such units to the active vocabulary of the speaker.

Due to the identifiability of science-fiction works (hereinafter – sci-fi), these syntactic structures transcend the limits of a separate discourse acquiring their own popularity. They function in a specific society as iconic phrases, referential units with their own semantics and communicative, pragmatic, and emotional potential.

Literature review. In linguistics and communication studies of the late 20th – early 21st centuries the issue of iconic phrases from various genres and discourses remains beyond the scope of most researchers. For instance, Laura Aguanno and David Sidhu [1] study the iconicity of semantics in the work with homographs. James Grice and Ian Jones [2] outline the specific details of iconicity of models on the crossroads of physics, astronomy, chemistry, biology, and psychology. Michael Müller [3] performs the analysis of structure and significance of visual clusters from the perspective of iconicity. The interrelation of mythology and iconic brands in their influence on self-identification of the tourist is represented in the academic paper by Effie Steriopoulos [4]. The study of the translation aspect of the iconic phrase "Basmala" in its historical, cultural, and artistic aspects done by Aria Fani and John Hayes [5] is of special importance for this paper.

The aim of the study is to analyze iconic phrases from sci-fi works of the late 20th – early 21st centuries (on the basis of literary discourse and cinema) according to their structure, historical and cultural background, semantics, communicative and pragmatic potential; to identify the located iconic phrases as lingual and cultural markers of the English science fiction of the 21st century.

Methods. Ascertaining and analysis of iconic phrases have been performed using a complex of methods on each stage. The formation of the research cluster (January-March, 2025) has been done using the continuous sampling method which allowed to range and group those units according to different parameters. The study of the structural features of these structures called for the method of syntactic modeling [6]. The method of component analysis and the method of distributive analysis were used to research the semantics and pragmatics of iconic phrases (March-May, 2025). At some stages, the method of statistical sampling was used for quantitative analysis.

Results and discussion. The language of the modern science fiction is a multi-dimensional phenomenon which accumulated a range of specific features from earlier works. The sci-fi language matrix of the early 21st century shows clear characteristics which can be used to prove that a certain work belongs to the genre under consideration. The integral constituents of sci-fi are scientific and technical terms, word-combinations, pseudo-terminology, author's neologisms, new grammemes created according to the word-building potential of the given language, collocations, etc. At the stage of secondary derivation, we observed the presence of secondary units – belonging to the genre proper – including pseudo-phrases, pseudo-folk formulaic units (more specifically, sayings or pseudo-folk proverbs, omens or superstitions created using templates of a specific national oral folklore), etc.

The specific component of the sci-fi language is a number of syntactic structures with a potential to transcend a specific work and, occasionally, to become more popular than the work itself. Each of these units is a "zest" of the sci-fi work forming the stable emotional connection between the unit and the recipient and ensuring unerring recognition of the work in the literary context or cinema art on the level of a single content consumer. In the dialogic / polylogic communication, the knowledge and understanding of this unit by interlocutors is a pre-requisite for bridging the communicational gap, providing a common emotional background and preventing misunderstandings.

Provided that the work has a social resonance, these units create stable social and emotional connections entering the everyday language use and acquiring referentiality. So, such phrase becomes "a text in the text" adding the semantics and pragmatics of the situation from the original sci-fi work to general discourse.

It should be noted that such phrases can sometimes be quoted as often as sayings of celebrities, proverbs, or even phraseologisms. They become

iconic phrases and enrich the lexical fund of a certain language. According to the standard definition, an "iconic" thing or image is "important or impressive because it seems to be a symbol of something" [7]. So, such units can serve as references not only to a certain work or a specific genre, but also to a certain lingual culture because of their social value and significance.

On the communicative level, such iconic structures make the speech more expressive creating additional dimensions in it when a timely phrase enriches the message with emotions providing the subtext and showing a clear author's message.

The selection of iconic phrases formed on the basis of sci-fi works comprises 35 units represented as:

a) apt remarks (separate exclamations, word-combinations, sentences) of movie characters, for instance: *The way you worry, you'll have a heart attack before you get a chance to survive World War III* (Tremors, 1990, director R. Underwood);

b) quotes from literary works: *"Can you remember your first taste of spice?" "It tasted like cinnamon". "But never twice the same" ... "It's like life – it presents a different face each time you take it"* [8];

c) phrases as components of the "legend" (introduction) of a cinematographic work: *Earth that was could no longer sustain our numbers. We were so many. We found a new solar system* (Serenity, 2005, director J. Whedon).

On the syntactic proper level, these structures can vary greatly – from simple sentences to complex ones with different types of clauses. Primarily, we are going to emphasize the exclamation-like structures which can include lexemes from various languages in order to convey the emotional intensity of the moment: *Hasta la vista, baby!* (Terminator 2: Judgment Day, 1991, director J. Cameron); *Son of a goddamn bitch! Pardon my French!* (Tremors, 1990, director R. Underwood). The same function is performed by rhetorical questions which present a mixture of disbelief, mistrust to the reality of the meeting with the unknown and at the same time irony (sarcasm): *Is there some higher force at work here? I mean, are we asking too much of life?* (Tremors, 1990, director R. Underwood).

The dominating syntactic type for apt remarks of characters and for literary quotes is a simple one- or two-component sentence, occasionally similar to a slogan (*Get ready for a surprise* (Total Recall, 1990, director P. Verhoeven)) or presenting a statement (*I am the Law* (Judge Dredd, 1995, director D. Cannon); *Sometimes somebody lies* (Doctor Who, 1996, director G. Sax); *The future is not set* (The Terminator, 1984, director J. Cameron) etc.) of a character, thus conveying their communicative message. Simple sentences become especially effective in a dialogue: *"Uh, maybe we should call NASA". "NASA have called us"*; *"Maybe we should call Air Force…" "Air Force is online"*; *"We are gonna die" "We are gonna die. You're gonna die. I'm gonna die. We're all gonna die. Just not today"* (Battleship, 2012, director P. Berg); *"Where'd you get it?" "I didn't know we had it"* (Tremors, 1990, director R. Underwood). This sentence type is easy to memorize and recreate in the speech.

The separate case is the usage of simple sentences to intensify the comical effect of the situation (*Eat recycled food. It's good for the environment and OK for you!* (Judge Dredd, 1995, director D. Cannon)) or the ironic attitude (*Officer Walker, I have some bad news for you. You're dead* (R.I.P.D.: Rest in Peace Department, 2013, director R. Schwentke); *"We got a schedule to keep". "Oh, yeah. See, we plan ahead. That way we don't do anything right now"* (Tremors, 1990, director R. Underwood)).

Among structurally complex iconic phrases, we have primarily singled out and analyzed compound sentences represented by isolated cases: *There is no fate but what we make for ourselves* (The Terminator, 1984, director J. Cameron). Complex sentences are the most active type of structures for book quotes and forming phrasal components of the "legend" of the work: *"I ask you, is this a job for intelligent man?" "Show me one, I'll ask him"* (Tremors, 1990, director R. Underwood). From this perspective, we primarily regard the complex units with dependent adverbial clauses: *He who controls the spice controls the Universe* (Dune, 1984, director D. Lynch) – adverbial subject clause; *At the end of the day, when you're all alone in the dark, the only thing that counts is this – the Law* (Judge Dredd, 1995, director D. Cannon) – adverbial clause of time; *Necromongers they're called. And if they cannot convert you, they will kill you* (The Chronicles of Riddick, 2004, director D. Twohy) – adverbial clause of condition, etc. Asyndetic compound sentences represent only rare cases (*Eat recycled food for a happier healthier life, be kind and peaceful to each other, eat recycled food* (Judge Dredd, 1995, director D. Cannon)). All in all, they, together with simple sentences, serve as slogans adding to the emotionality of the situation.

So, the most widely used types of syntactic structures forming iconic phrases are a simple two-component sentence and a complex sentence (of various types).

According to their purpose, such iconic structures can represent a range of emotions of a character,

reflect their psychological state or provide an emotive-evaluational description of the current situation, for instance: *"I got a bad feeling about this?" "What kind of bad feeling?" "Like, 'we're going to need a new planet' kind of bad feeling"* (Battleship, 2012, director P. Berg) – anxiety during the first tragic contact with extraterrestrial creatures; *Oh, hell, man, no one ever saw anything like this!* (Tremors, 1990, director R. Underwood) – a mixture of mistrust and surprise caused by the first contact, etc. Among the main emotions explicated by iconic phrases, we are going to stress the spectrum of negative feelings. Among those, we single out:

a) uncontrolled fear: *I'll be back* (The Terminator, 1984, director J. Cameron);

b) anxiety, premonition of future ominous events: *If there is intelligent life out there and they come here, it's gonna be like Columbus and the Indians. Only we're the Indians* (Battleship, 2012, director P. Berg);

c) feeling of being lost and helpless during the contact with an extraterrestrial form of life: *What the hell are we supposed to use, man, harsh language?* (Aliens, 1986, director J. Cameron).

Within the positive emotional range, we can locate iconic phrases with references to:

a) hope (for the humankind – the author's remark): *The future is not set* (The Terminator, 1984, director J. Cameron);

b) decisiveness (in the fight against AI-controlled cyborgs – author's remark): *There is no fate but what we make for ourselves* (The Terminator, 1984, director J. Cameron);

c) moral resilience (balance): *At the end of the day, when you're all alone in the dark, the only thing that counts is this – the Law* (Judge Dredd, 1995, director D. Cannon).

Nowadays, their usage makes the interlocution more colorful and provides a clear emotional connotation with a strong link to the semantic load. In general, iconic phrases can convey:

a) philosophical message: *Dreams are messages from the deep* (Dune, 2021, director D. Villeneuve);

b) a reference to the professional ethic, occupational activity: *At the end of the day, when you're all alone in the dark, the only thing that counts is this – the Law* (Judge Dredd, 1995, director D. Cannon);

c) pseudo-/religious, rite formulae, mantras: *I must not fear. Fear is the mind-killer… I will face my fear... Where the fear has gone there will be nothing. Only I will remain* [8];

d) moral maxims: *Dreams make good stories, but everything important happens when you're awake* (Dune, 2021, director D. Villeneuve);

e) general description of the situation: *You know, those college kids turn up oil or uranium or something out there. Next thing the feds will be at your door. "Sorry. Time to move. Eminent domain"* (Tremors, 1990, director R. Underwood).

It should be elucidated that the analysis showed separate cases of synonymy of iconic phrases from different works. Those phrases are similar in their emotional load and general message. Compare: *To fight monsters, we created monsters of our own* (Pacific Rim, 2013, director G. del Toro) / *In normal times, evil would be fought by good. But in times like these, well, it should be fought by another kind of evil* (The Chronicles of Riddick, 2004, director D. Twohy), which realize the common semantics "action causes counter-action" in reaching the status quo.

The dynamics of the meaning of some iconic phrases has been observed while the plot unfolds. Originally, the sentence *Come with me if you want to live* (The Terminator, 1984, director J. Cameron), said by a human to a human, conveyed the hope for salvation (from a killer cyborg), while in the second installment of the popular franchise (Terminator 2: Judgment Day, 1991, director J. Cameron) this iconic unit gets a nearly ontological depth as it is said by a re-programmed ("good") cyborg to a human rescued from a modern ("evil") killer machine. The situation itself is similar to the above-mentioned synonymic structures about the survival of the whole humankind.

The historical and cultural background of the iconic phrases analyzed in the selection has been formed by a range of socially significant sources. Among them there are as follows:

a) the Bible (the presence of literary tropes, textual parallels), when a pseudo-Biblical narration (see Table 1) forms the "legend" and the basis of the cinematographic work, while the iconic unit *The Sixth Day Law* (The 6th Day, 2000, director R. Spottiswoode) presents a direct allusion to the Scripture;

b) national mythology: *To fight monsters* (Kaiju – author's remark)*, we created monsters* (Jäger – author's remark) *of our own* (Pacific Rim, 2013, director G. del Toro) – the iconic phrase has a clear reference to the German lingual culture (where Jäger "a hunter", whose life purpose, hunting, resonates with the purpose of a high-technology anthropomorphic machine (hunting monsters)), while Kaiju (a giant beast / monster) refers to the Japanese cultural and artistic phenomenon;

c) philosophical teachings, spiritual mantras, practices, to which the iconic phrase is analogical. The

Table 1

Text Parallels to Iconic Phrases

The Sixth Day [9]	The Sixth Day Law
[24]*And God said, "Let the earth bring forth living creatures according to their kinds – livestock and creeping things and beasts of the earth according to their kinds". And it was so.* [25]*And God made the beasts of the earth according to their kinds and the livestock according to their kinds, and everything that creeps on the ground according to its kind. And God saw that it was good.* [26]*Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth* (Genesis 1:24-26)	*As a consequence, there is a Sixth Day law that prohibits the cloning of a human being.* *There is a mandatory 40-year minimum sentence for participating in cloning a human being.* *Cloned humans are not persons under the law, cannot own property, and will be killed if they are discovered* [10].

phrase conveys general human values or contributes to spiritual calmness, healing of the character, etc.: *I must not fear. Fear is the mind-killer… I will face my fear... Where the fear has gone there will be nothing. Only I will remain* [8];

d) apt phrases (or proverbs), when iconic units created using them as a template acquire an ironic or philosophical subtext: *Sometimes somebody lies* (Doctor Who, 1996, director G. Sax).

Active usage of such iconic phrases in the real-life speech contributes to the reassessment of their semantics and provides them with a powerful communicative and pragmatic potential. For instance, the final phrase *Hasta la vista, baby!* (Terminator 2: Judgment Day, 1991, director J. Cameron) from an iconic movie acquired a meaning "something which you part with without regret, with undertones of finality and sarcasm". We can also highlight the pragmatics of a threat (*I'll be back* (The Terminator, 1984, director J. Cameron); appeal (*Eat recycled food. It's good for the environment and OK for you!* (Judge Dredd, 1995, director D. Cannon)), and call for action (*Come with me if you want to live* (The Terminator, 1984, director J. Cameron)).

In general, the use of iconic phrases from sci-fi works in other language matrices and other contexts contributes to "blurring" the genre boundaries, and iconic phrases themselves are transformed into specific language formulas improving the mutual "recognition" of interlocutors and providing a common emotional and cultural background. The iconic phrases studied in the context of science fiction context function as full-fledged markers of English lingual culture for speakers of other languages. The most significant functions are as follows:

a) hypertextual;

b) identifying;

c) communicative;

d) sociocultural;

e) emotive, and

f) aesthetic.

Conclusions. Thus, in the early 21st century, the iconic phrases from sci-fi works serve as proper markers of Anglophone lingual culture, its pronounced representatives forming the national lingual world-image and ensuring the identifiability among speakers of other languages. The results of this research can contribute to further studies of the iconicity issue on the lexical and semantic level and of iconic phrases from other genres.

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