

Abstract

The thesis deals with the project of interpretative semantics as it has been developed by the French linguist François Rastier. The aim of the thesis is twofold: Firstly, to introduce and to further elaborate on the principles of this theory. Secondly, to point out possible benefits of Rastier's project for interpretation and analysis of literary texts.

The key issue which characterizes the Rastier's semantics and which also represents the main axis of the present thesis can be put forward as follows. On one hand, the interpretative semantics grasps the text as a linguistic object which is open to various formal arrangements and to various articulations of semantic units. On the other hand, each text in its linguistic and non-linguistic context receives a particular shape and particular meaning.

This general issue is discussed in detail in four mutually bound chapters where it is also applied on literary texts:

(1) The first chapter deals with the notion of *isotopy* as the main textual principle. From the perspective of this concept a text cannot be grasped as a “big sentence” with an apriori determined syntax. Textuality rather resides in relationships between iterated (isotopic) elements which can be detected in the particular text on different linguistic levels (morphemes, lexies, sentences). Furthermore, the chapter deals with relationships which bind together the isotopic groups. These relationships contribute to the cohesion of the text.

(2) The second chapter concerns the notion of *passage* which – in the realm of Rastier's semantics – refers to the elementary textual unit. Regarding this issue Rastier argues that text is not a string of invariant elements which can take place throughout different utterances (actants, narrative events or functions). Still, one can analyze the text into its basic components which can be methodically described. It is argued that these components are articulated in the field of a particular text as specific linguistic values, not in the realm of a textual *langue* logically preceding the textual *parole*.

(3) The third chapter is devoted to the question of textual *productivity* which stems from Rastier's division between afferent and inherent semantic features. The notion of inherence refers to the semes embedded in a functional linguistic paradigm (a universally shared language which is not bound to a particular social group or social praxis). The notion of afference refers to the semes which are embedded in a socially distinctive discourse or in the specific arrangement of the text. That is, not only paradigms but also the text itself can determine its meaning.

(4) The fourth chapter deals with the question of the *linear structure* of the text and its connection to semantics. It is argued that linearity is not a mere formal aspect of texts but it can also work as an indicator of its meaning. Furthermore, this chapter describes various linear forms and their semantic functions.