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# ICONICITY OF SYNTAX AND NARRATIVE IN AMERINDIAN PROSAIC TEXTS

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**Abstract**: The notion that the form of a word bears an arbitrary relation to its meaning accounts only partly for the attested relations between form and meaning in the world's languages. Recent research suggests a more textured view of syntactic and narrative structure in Amerindian prosaic texts, in which arbitrariness is complemented by iconicity (aspects of form resemble aspects of meaning) and systematicity (statistical regularities in forms predict function).

**Keywords**: Amerindian prosaic texts, syntax, narrative, syntactic and narrative structure, arbitrariness, iconicity, resembling the meaning.

## 1. Introduction

Iconicity is a term used in semiotics to characterize the relationship of similarity between a sign and the object it represents. In iconicity studies (Freeman 2007; Haiman 1985; Lehman 2007), the subject of special interest is the difference between motivation and isomorphism. A sign that is related to another sign either by analogy of its internal structure or by property of the syntactic context, in which it appears (as in anaphora or epiphora), is said to be motivated (Lehman 2007: 17). Freeman states that it refers to the non-arbitrary relation between the language sign and the conceptualized real world (2007: 481). For Haiman (1980: 515-516) isomorphism is restricted between form and meaning in a linguistic utterance, whereas the relation between form and extralinguistic reality concerns an iconicity of motivation.

Through iconic depictions, signs may represent characteristics of an entity, motion patterns, and spatial relationships between objects (Haiman 1985). Iconic signs may also represent whole entities; parts of an object or simply point at objects present (Fischer & Nänny 1999). Iconicity is also expressed at the sub-lexical level because the phonological constituents of signs may also express features of the concept they represent (Leech & Short 2007; Simone 1995).

The content and message of ethnocultural symbols (Sandner 1991) can be downscaled in the literary space of the text by stylistic analysis, which highlights the connection between language worldview and culture (Levitsky 2016) and provides valuable clues (Stashko 2017), among which syntax has the utmost force.

Syntactic imagery is viewed as a combination of heterogeneous and homogeneous syntactic constructions within a certain textual fragment. Cognitive operations, such as juxtaposition, mapping, projecting, and contrasting, are involved in meaning-making of syntactic imagery so as to reveal the mechanism of mapping the structures of knowledge of ethnocultural symbols or artefacts onto the syntactic structure of literary text.

Interest in the nature of narrative dates back millennia, while a consistent theoretical consideration of the nature of narrative is the legacy of the formalist writings from the beginning of the 20$^{th}$ century (Propp 2011), as well as the structuralist works (Barthes 1975; Genette [1979] 1983; Schmid 2014; Todorov 1969)

Interpretation of narrative structure iconicity is directed towards finding the analogues between literary (poetic) and mythical thought in expressing the ethnocultural meaning, defining how narrative might be part of the structure of special vision and understanding the objects of reality, a reality that is both visible and invisible. The narrative text directs the reader's attention toward the authorial ethnopoetic principle,

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which is not the expression of realistic, objective thinking, but rather evokes a poetic, mythical mode of thought (Schmid 2014).

## 2. Prose as an icon of the Amerindian view of the world

The **aim** of the paper is to show that arranging the syntactic and narrative structure of the text iconically resembles the Amerindian worldview materialized in ethnocultural artefacts, symbols, and way of telling. At the level of syntax, the idea is that syntax with its characteristic shifting of grammatical forms and superimposition or stratification of appositive syntactical structures serves as an iconic lexico-grammatical variant representing the concept considered to be an ethnocultural symbol or artefact in the Native American philosophy of life.

My choice of Amerindian prose as the **material** of research to illustrate my argument continues my set of works (Volkova 2016; 2017) devoted to this layer of American literature. Pleiades of Native American Renaissance (Lincoln 1985) novelists – Louise Erdrich (Ojibwa), Linda Hogan (Chicksaw), Navarre Scott Momaday (Kiowa), Leslie Marmon Silko (Laguna Pueblo), Gerald Vizenor (Ojibwa), and James Welch (Blackfoot) – promote the idea of ethnocultural values renaissance. They stand for highlighting such concepts as balance, harmony, and cyclicity of life stream (Garrett 1998).

While illustrating how the structure of syntax and narrative resembles ethnocultural symbols and artefacts, the paper integrates linguistic and cognitive, cognitive cultural and semiotic **methods** of syntactic and narrative analysis in showing the net of mind and language in highlighting ethnocultural concepts, values, and way of thinking.

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## *2.1 Cycling of life in Amerindian understanding*

*Everything the power of the world does is done in a circle.*
*The sky is round and I have heard that the earth is round like a ball*
*and so are all the stars. The wind, in its greatest power, whirls.*
*Birds make their nests in circles, for theirs is the same religion as ours.*
*The sun comes forth and goes down again in a circle. The moon*
*does the same and both are round. Even the seasons form a great circle in their*
*changing and always come back again to where they were.*
Black Elk, Holy Man of the Oglala Sioux
(Garrett 1998: 75)

Amerindians believe (Garrett 1998) that not only Earth is round, but the very nature of the universe, Mother Earth moves in cycles (Fig. 1). These cycles reflect the continuous "Circle of life" (Garrett 1998: 76).

Figure 1. Cyclicity of the Universe (picture available at: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Universe#/media/File:NASA-HS201427a-HubbleUltraDeepField2014-20140603.jpg)

As Garrett explains, the components of the Circle of life, depicted as the ordinal compass points of the Circle, include mind, body, spirit, and the natural environment as a way of representing the aspects of Medicine (Garrett 1998: 77).

These main concepts are grounded in Amerindian ethnocultural artefact – Medicine Wheel, which is the symbol of harmony and balance (Sandner 1991). The Medicine Wheel (Fig. 2) has a round form and four marked points denoting different notions: the

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four grandfathers, the four winds, the four cardinal directions, and many other relationships that can be expressed in sets of four.

In "Sacred tree" (2004) Judie and Michael Bopp explain that there are four dimensions of 'true learning'. These four aspects of every person's nature are reflected in the four cardinal points of the Medicine Wheel. These four aspects of our being are developed through the use of our volition. It cannot be said that a person has totally learned in a whole and balanced manner unless all four dimensions of their being have been involved in the process (Bopp 2004: 29):

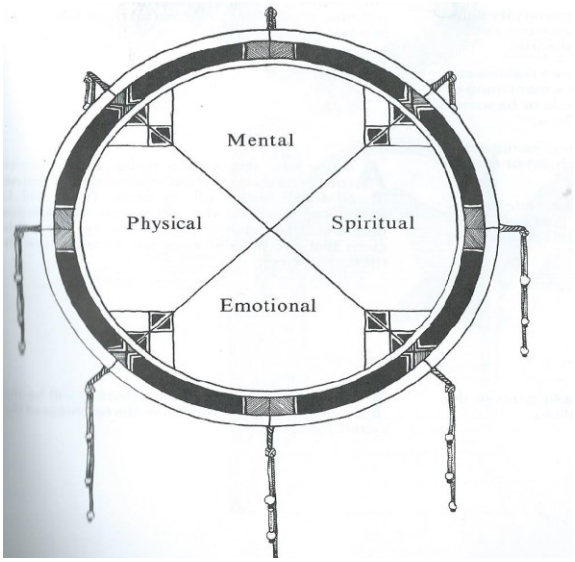


Figure 2. Medicine Wheel (Bopp 2004: 29)

For these reasons the Oglala, Navajo, or Kiowa make their *tepees* circular, their camp-circle circular, and sit in a circle at all ceremonies. For instance, Sun Dance, the ceremony ordinarily held by each tribe once a year usually at the time of the Summer Solstice. The Sun Dance symbolises the continuity between life and death − a regeneration, and shows that there is no true end to life, but a cycle of symbolic and true deaths and rebirths (Fig. 3):

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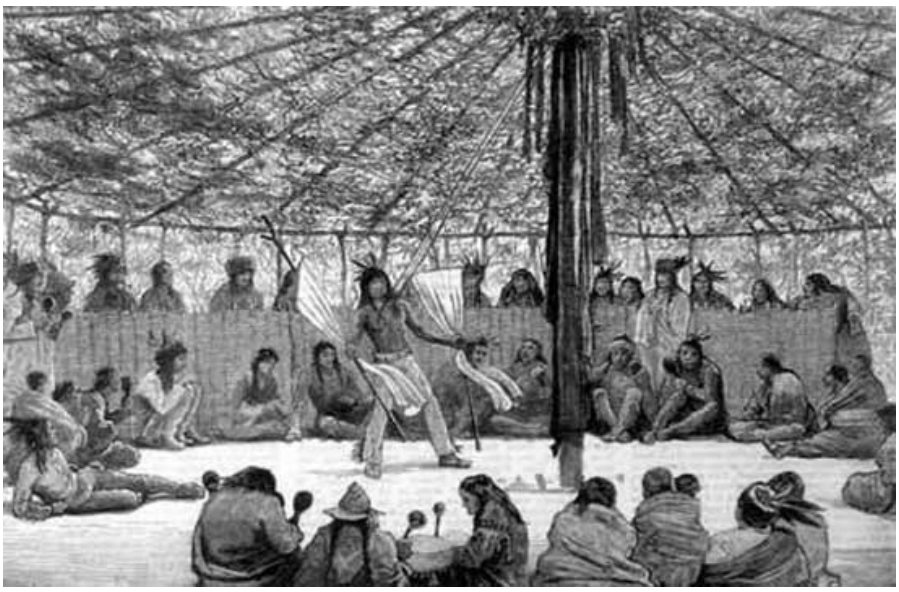

Figure 3. The sun dance (picture available at: http://www.crystalinks.com/sundance.html)

The circle is also the symbol of the teepee and of a shelter. If one makes a circle for an ornament and it is not divided in any way, it should be understood as the symbol of the world and of time (Geertz 1973: 128). Sitting in a circle during different ceremonies and rituals is an iconic depiction of that continuity understanding. It is rooted in the Amerindian worldview (Fig. 4) that everything develops in a cycle and each cycle is followed by another one like a spiral consisting of different cycles:

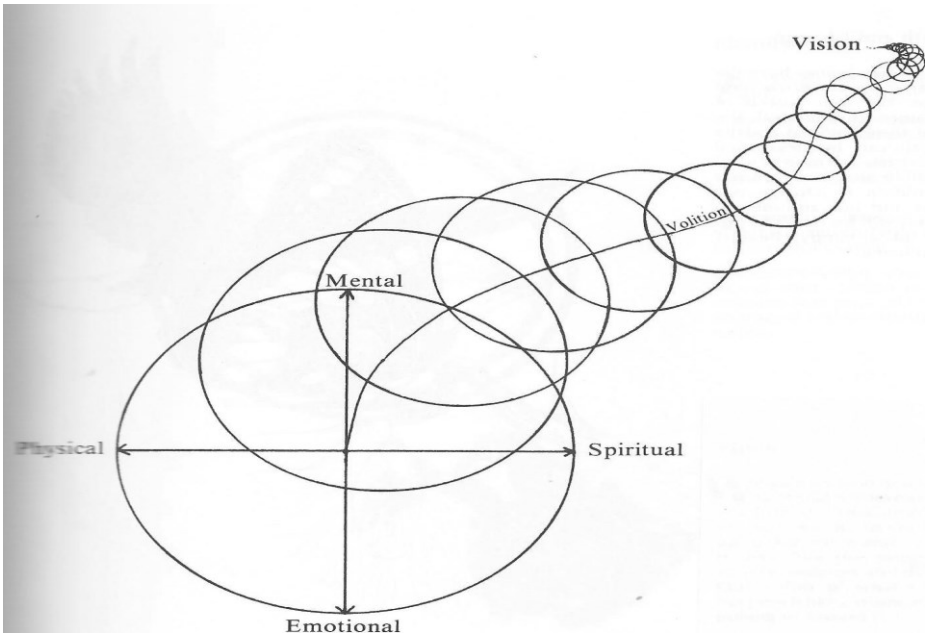


Figure 4. Vision (Bopp 2004: 15)

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In "The sacred tree" (2004), Bopp states: "We gain a vision (Fig. 4) of what our potential is from our elders and from the Teachings of the Sacred Tree. By trying to live up to that vision and by trying to live like the people we admire, we grow and develop. Our vision of what we can become is like a strong magnet pulling us toward it" (Bopp 2004: 15).

The Amerindian worldview is reflected in the prosaic texts and can be interpreted at different textual levels, for instance, narrative and syntactic. My linguistic **aim** is to illustrate the way of syntactic devices eclectic (set of parallelism, repetition, anaphora, epiphora, chiasmus) resembling the semiotic principle of Cycle in literary texts narrative structure.

*2.2 Syntactic imaginary in prose as iconic depiction of ethnocultural meaning*

In her article in the first volume of the *Form miming meaning: Iconicity in language and literature*, Tabakowska (1999: 411) makes the following point:

> *Traditionally, it has been generally assumed that iconic relations are one-way processes: from expression to concept. However, if we agree that the ability to recognize a given similarity results from the language user's knowledge of a given culture and language, then we can also reasonably assume that the process may be reversed: via the (linguistic) convention, the user of language might associate (by recognizing relevant similarities) certain expressions with certain concepts, and in consequence arrive at a certain view, or interpretation, of reality.*

The suggestion that Tabakowska makes here – that iconicity has something to do with the way we perceive reality and that the user of language might associate certain expressions with certain concepts – reflects the direction I will take in defining what is meant by iconicity of syntax and narrative in reflecting the ethnocultural meaning in modern Amerindian prose.

The focus of my study now moves to works by Linda Hogan whose Native homeland, history, and literary contribution are located in her filial associations with the Five Civilized Tribes.

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Her novel "Mean spirit" is a historical mystery novel grounded on the consequences of species arrogance. Such arrogance is the "mean spirit" that pervaded Oklahoma following the discovery of oil on Indian allotments in the early 1920s. Floods of lawyers, policy makers, and white citizens congregated in Oklahoma in order to legitimize placing Indian women and children in the hands of money-hungry men. During this period, Anglos became legal guardians or custodians of Indian people and lands under the ruse that Indian people were incompetent to handle their own affairs. Many characters in Hogan's novel are drawn from actual tribal family histories. Hogan combines history, politics, and mythology in "Mean spirit". In her biographical essay on Hogan, Shanley claims:

> *As a writer of Chickasaw heritage, Linda Hogan centers herself and, consequently, her readers on what nature has to teach human beings and on the regenerative female forces that shape the world. The Chickasaw were matrilineal and matrilocal in precontact times; other tribes, though patriarchal, revered their women as the creative life force of the universe. Domination by Christian Europeans has altered the traditional tribal balance between male and female power in American Indian life. In her words, Hogan seeks to restore that balance and to offer ancient wisdom about nature in mythological yet contemporary terms* (1997: 123-124).

Now, I turn your attention to the fragment from Hogan's novel "Mean spirit":

*All life is sacred. Live gently with the land. We are one with the land. We are part of everything in our world, part of the roundness and cycles of life. The world does not belong to us. We belong to the world. And all life is sacred* (L. Hogan "Mean spirit", p. 361-362).

Syntax and semiotic interpretation of this excerpt makes us think that we do not inhabit the world, as some have said. Inhabitants invoke the CONTAINER metaphor, which predicates that objects are separate from that which contains them (Freeman 2007: 484). We belong to a sacred world and are part of everything in it. This precision of meaning is what the author attempts in iconic representation. Hogan does not use 'on' being, but 'of' and 'to' being, that is a part of the world.

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The narration is developing like a spiral from a simple sentence to compound unextended and compound extended. The preposition *of* occurs twice in the middle of the narration. And it is symbolic. The middle of the narration is like the central point of a Medicine Wheel.

Cycling here is also verbalized by chiasmus *'The world does not belong to us. We belong to the world'* Breck says that "uniqueness of chiasmus, as distinct from other forms of parallelism, lies in its focus upon a pivotal theme, about which the other propositions of the literary unit are developed" (2008). In view of this emphasis inherent in chiastic structures, be they literary or oral, Welch suggests that conceptually chiasmus should be conceived of as a series of concentric circles, as opposed to simply a series of parallel lines (Tollers & Maier 1990: 369).

In the given above three lines from "Mean spirit" by Linda Hogan, syntactic, semantic, and narrative structures work together to resemble iconically the cycling of life, which is shown on the Medicine Wheel (Fig. 2).

The content and message of ethnocultural symbols can be downscaled in literary space of the text by various imagery means among which syntactic imagery has the utmost force.

Syntactic imagery is viewed as a combination of heterogeneous and homogeneous syntactic structures within a certain textual fragment. Due to this, I would like to illustrate with examples some types of syntactic structures combination, which iconically resemble ethnocultural symbols or artefacts.

The first one in my list is the **framing** of syntactic structures:

***Abel was running*** *and his body cracked open with pain, and he was running on.* ***He was running*** *and there was no reason to run, but the running itself and the land and*

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*the dawn appearing. He saw the slim black bodies of the runners in the distance, gliding away without.* ***He was running*** *and a cold sweat broke out upon him and his breath heaved with the pain of running. His legs buckled and he fell in the snow. And he got up and ran on. All of his being was concentrated in the sheer motion of running on. He could see the dark hills and under his breath he began to sing.* ***He was running***. (N.S. Momaday "House made of dawn", p. 185).

The repetition of the sentences in the beginning and at the end of this narrative visualizes the circle, an Amerindian Medicine Wheel. In "A practical guide to ceremonies and traditions" Garrett (2002: 70) writes:

> *The circle of life begins with the fire in the centre, the birth that spirals into the direction of the East for the protection of family while developing. Then life spirals to the direction of the South to learn how to play. At about the age of seven we start our spiral to the direction of the West, where we learn competition and endurance for work and play through the teen years. Then we spiral to the direction of the North, where we learn the skills and knowledge of an adult to be a teacher and master of our abilities or trade. We continue to spiral until we reach our elder years as we return to the sacred fire of life, to begin again in the spirit world as ancestors.*

The description of *running* taken from Momaday's "House made of dawn" is a metaphor of the circle of life, as the hero starts his running at dawn, which is the symbol of the beginning of a new day, a new period of life, a new way of life, etc. A Medicine Wheel has four main points, which are the signs of starting each new spiral of life. In the narrative under analysis such points are verbalized by anaphora (*He was running*) repeated four times. At the end the hero starts singing, which signals his rebirthing reaching some new spiral of life full of new world understanding and human wisdom.

The next type of syntactic structure arrangement is their *crossmapping*, in which the first and the third as well as the second and the forth sentences have parallel structures, as, for instance, in "House made of dawn" (Momaday 1999: 1):

***There was*** *a house made of dawn.* ***It was*** *made of pollen and of rain, and the land was very old and everlasting.* ***There were*** *many colors on the hills, and the plain was bright*

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*with different-colored clays and sands. The land was still and strong.* ***It was*** *beautiful all around* (N.S. Momaday "House made of dawn", p. 1).

Four sides of Amerindian dwelling (teepee) (Fig. 5) are verbalized in the abstract above by means of parallel syntactic structures (*There was – There were, It was – It was*).

Figure 5. Amerindian teepee (picture available at: https://www.google.com.ua/search?q=amerindian+teepee+in+pictures&tbm=isch&tbo=u&source=univ&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwiM_I2PkuvYAhVIWiwKHSEmB_kQsAQIJg&biw=1366&bih=613)

Though a teepee has a round shape it looks north, south, east, and west, that is has four sides. This idea is iconically depicted by means of grammar, semantics, and syntactic structures in the text.

In the book *Concept, image and symbol* (1990) Langacker, pointing out that language is an integral facet of cognition, claims that grammar structure cannot be understood or revealingly described independently of semantic considerations (1990). In the above given samples I illustrate how the mind and language cooperate in expressing the meaning.

In many sign languages, lexical variants may represent physical features of a referent (perceptual signs) or an action associated with an object (action signs). The theory of iconicity is formulated historically. So, according to Saussure's principle of arbitrariness (1857-1913), verbal signs are essentially unrelated to whatever they

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signify. On the contrary, Jacobson in his article *Quest for the essence of language* ([1965] 1971) paid much attention to iconic aspects of language. Whereas such aspects were first considered marginal, further research has shown that there is iconicity at all levels of language in phonology, morphology and syntax as well as at the textual level (Johansen 1996).

As a sample, I give an excerpt taken from "Dwellings" (Hogan 1995: 135): *ONE GREEN AND HUMID SUMMER, MY FATHER AND I were driving through the hot Oklahoma countryside. I had just handed over the wheel of the truck to him and was bathing my face with a wet cloth when something that looked like a long golden strand of light* ***leapt*** *up,* ***twisted*** *in the wavering air, and* ***flew*** *lightning fast across the road. That flying snake, that thin flash of light, brought back a store of memories* […] (L. Hogan "Dwellings", p. 135).

Juxtaposition of syntactic structures in combination with semantic of words describing the sudden appearance of the snake triggers association of the snake body and its winding moving. A graphical reproduction of this description is given below (Fig. 6):

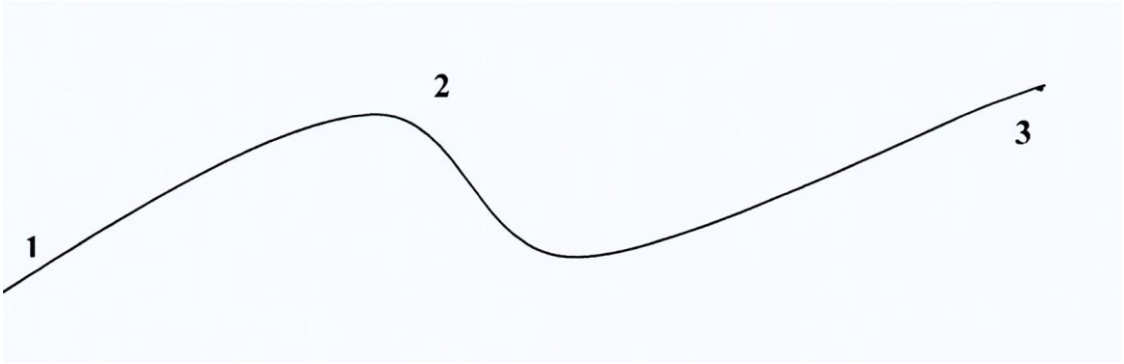


Figure 6. The body of a snake verbalized with syntactic structures in the text. Picture made by the author with the use of standard Microsoft Office graphic tools.

1 – *I had just handed over the wheel of the truck to him and was bathing my face with a wet cloth (as if it were* the first part of the snake's body looks like slow moving: past

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perfect tense is followed by past continuous; two parts are joined by means of the conjunction *and*);

2 – *when something that looked like a long golden strand of light* (then the snake's body winds and it is reproduced by means of a conjunctive word *when* that changes the linear direction and visualizes winding of some part of the snake's body);

3 – *leapt up, twisted in the wavering air, and flew lightning fast across the road* (reproduces the third part of the snake's body, which is expressed by enumeration of dynamic actions, happening one by one).

In cognitive linguistics iconicity is the conceived similarity between a form of language and its meaning. Finding such similarity in language the interpreter should follow the principle of quantity (formal complexity corresponds to conceptual complexity), the principle of proximity (conceptual distance tends to match with linguistic distance), and the sequential order principle (the sequential order of events described is mirrored in the speech chain) (Johansen 1996).

Iconic coding principles are natural tendencies in language and are also part of our cognitive and biological make-up. This field of investigation has been in the focus of investigation for many centuries. So, in his book "The literary mind and dragon carving" ancient Chinese writer Liu Xie (465-520) touched upon the view that pictographic writing co-exists with nature and that heaven and earth are concepts formed by human cognition of the objective world.

According to Xu (1988), Liu's linguistic theory goes like this:
The objective world ↓
Human conceptual processing (human perception) ↓
Language (speech is the reflection of mind) ↓
Writing (writing comes from speech).

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In Liu's work, one can also find the categorization of signs into Iconic signs, echoic signs, and emotive signs (Xu 1988).

Let's turn to the excerpt from Hogan's "Dwellings", in which she is expressing her philosophic understanding of such concepts as LIFE, BEAUTY OF THE WORLD, drawing association between woman and snake: […] *At first I **thought** this dream **was** about Indian tradition, how if each person **retained** part of a history, an entire culture and lifeway **remained** intact and alive, one thing living through the other, as the snake and woman in the dream. But since that time, I've expanded my vision. Now, it **seems** that what **needs** to be saved, even in its broken pieces, **is** earth itself, the tradition of life, the beautiful blue-green world that **lives** in the coiling snake of the **Milky Way*** (L. Hogan "Dwellings", p. 139).

The object of focalisation in this narrative is the Milky Way, which is curling like a snake. Thinking over the place of a person in history the author states, based on her own experience, that entire culture and lifeway remain intact and alive as the snake and the woman in the dream (human perception). And then we can see how speech reflects thinking. Until the sentence *But since that time, I've expanded my vision* the narrator uses past tenses, then from this central point shifting of tenses takes place. After this central in narrative sentence, the narrator uses the forms of Present Simple. And this shifting coincides with semantic of the narrative, that is the narrator tells about expanding of his/her vision.

It looks like the Milky Way, which is a barred spiral galaxy, about 100,000 light-years across. If you could look down on it from the top, you would see a central bulge surrounded by four large spiral arms that wrap around it. Spiral galaxies make up about two-third of the galaxies in the universe (Fig. 7):

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Figure 7. Milky Way (picture available at: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Milky_Way#/media/File:UGC_12158.jpg)

Prosaic texts by Native American writers contain tales about ceremonies and ritual dances. I try to map the manner of performing the dance onto the syntactic reproduction of it in the text.

In the picture (Fig. 8), there is a Sun Dance performance:

Figure. 8. Sun Dance (picture available at: https://www.google.com.ua/search?q=amerindian+sun+dance+in+pictures&tbm=isch&tbo=u&source=univ&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwj9gIKNi-vYAhWBrSwKHZG9BesQsAQIJg&biw=1366&bih=613)

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Dancers usually have some symbolic attributes: they wear clothes decorated with eagle feathers (the eagle is the symbol of the Great Spirit), they hold a wooden ring in their right hand and stand in a circle as if it were a Medicine Wheel. All these details symbolize the balance and harmony the people want to live in.

In his novel "House made of dawn" (Momaday 1999: 32-33) Momaday includes the elements of some dances and ceremonies. In the following excerpt, the reader without hearing music and watching dancers' performance may be involved in the rhythm of the dance by means of syntactic structures combination:

(1) *It was beautiful and strange.* ***They****, the dancers,* ***were*** *so terribly serious in what they were doing.* ***They were*** *grave, so unspeakably grave.* ***They were*** *not merely sad or formal or devout; it was nothing like that.* ***They were*** *grave, distant, intent upon something* (N.S. Momaday "House made of dawn", p. 32);

(2) *They saw nothing at all, nothing at all.* **To see nothing***at all, nothing in the absolute.* **To see beyond** *the landscape, beyond every shape and shadow and color that was to see nothing.* **To see nothing** *slowly and by degrees.* **To see beyond** *the clouds and the pale wash of the sky – the none and nothing beyond that* (N.S. Momaday "House made of dawn", p. 33).

Comparing the dance performance with that described in the text makes us understand that language is a resembled mapping of dancers' movements.

In the 1st fragment anaphora resembles the way the dancers go round (four sentences start with *They were*). The number of repeated sentences is 4, which symbolizes the cycle of life whose knowledge is embedded in the concept of the Medicine Wheel.

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In the 2nd fragment the narrator uses parallel structures (*To see nothing – To see beyond, To see nothing – To see beyond*) that looks as if dancers take steps forward then steps backward.

Therefore, to explain the seemingly unlimited expressive power of language, a reasonable starting assumption might be that the relation between form and meaning in words is arbitrary and therefore unconstrained: any combination of sounds can signify any meaning (Chandler 2007; Hockett 1958; Saussure 1993). As understanding advances, idealised conceptions give way to more refined models of language form and language function. Moreover, the way of reflecting an ethnocultural worldview in language is the object of special concern. But syntax does not work alone to solve different tasks of that kind, it works in the narrative. The next step of the present analysis is to show the great ability of narrative structure to resemble an ethnocultural understanding of the world.

*2.3 Iconicity of narrative in Amerindian prosaic texts*

Text is a set of narratives in which verbal signs imply different information about a signified object. Postmodernist narrative incorporates modes of narration, which at once departs from traditional ways of depicting events. Schmid (2003: 9) defines the narrative event as a non-trivial change of state that takes place and reaches completion (is 'resultative') in the actual ('real') world of any particular fictional narrative. Its narrativity depends on its non-triviality, which in turn is a factor of its eventfulness. Hühn (2008) supplements Schmid's concept by drawing on schema theory and Lotman's concept of the 'semantic field'. Combining these two areas of research, I may conclude that the cognitive drama of schematic disruption and an awareness of historical and cultural contexts afford the recognition of differing semantic socio-cultural and ethnocultural fields.

In the context of my work, I analyse how the set of narrative events reflects the way of thinking and world understanding resembling the sense of ethnocultural artefacts,

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concepts, and ceremonies. My effort is to ground that mentality is strictly reflected not only at the level of syntax, but at the narrative level as well.

Speaking about iconicity of the narrative structure, I think that such an aspect as ethnocultural identity with its sacredness, shamanism, and medicine should be highlighted.

In his paper "Identity and narration" in "Handbook of narratology" (2014) Bamberg (2014: 241) states that "identity designates the attempt to differentiate and integrate a sense of self along different social and personal dimensions such as gender, age, race, occupation, ethnicity, class, or regional territory". In my paper I am more interested in finding the iconicity between life and story or as Bamberg defines "the metaphoric process of seeing life as storied that has given substantive fuel to the narrative turn" (2014: 245). This is very nicely expressed by Langacker (1977: 106-107) in his metaphor of language as a "compacting machine":

*It would not be entirely inappropriate to regard languages ... as gigantic expression-compacting machines. They require as input a continuous flow of creatively produced expressions formed by lexical innovation, by lexically and grammatically regular periphrasis. and by the figurative use of lexical and periphrastic locutions. The machine does whatever it can to wear down the expressions fed into it. It fades metaphors by standardizing them and using them over and over again. It attacks expressions of all kinds by phonetic erosion. It bleaches lexical items of most of their semantic contents and forces them into service as grammatical markers. It chips away at the boundaries between elements and crushes them together into smaller units. The machine has a voracious appetite. Only the assiduous efforts of speakers – who salvage what they can from its output and recycle it by using their creative energies to fashion a steady flow of new expressions to feed back in – keep the whole thing going,*

Langacker emphasises the writer's creative 'energies'. It is here indeed that iconicity comes back in: i.e. iconicity is not just characteristic of an earlier, more primitive stage of language, but it plays a role whenever a writer's expressivity is at issue; when, for whatever reason, he or she is trying to express himself or herself anew, in a more concrete or less worn-down form of language.

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The narratives, in which Amerindian writers metaphorically express ethnocultural concepts and values characterizing the ethnocultural identity, can be demonstrated by differing responses of such leading figures in Native literature as Sherman Alexie, who investigates the growing complexity of 'Indian' identity in different states of the USA and then creates his characters in short stories and novels, also mixed blood Paula Gunn Allen, and full blood Linda Hogan.

Alexie is one of the most acclaimed and popular American writers today. Now, with "Ten little Indians" (2004), he offers nine poignant and emotionally resonant new stories about Native Americans who, like all Americans, find themselves at personal and cultural crossroads, faced with heartrending, tragic, sometimes wondrous moments of being that test their loyalties, their capacities, and their notions of who they are and who they love.

In Alexie's story about a mother/son relationship, "The life and times of Estelle walks above" in "Ten little Indians" (2004: 134), the son says of himself: *To this day I rarely look in the mirror and think, I'm an Indian. I don't necessarily know what an Indian is supposed to be. After all, I don't speak my tribal language, and I'm allergic to the earth. If it grows, it makes me sneeze. In Salish, 'Spokane' means 'Children of the Sun', but I'm slightly allergic to the sun. If I spend too much time inside, I get a nasty rash. I doubt Crazy Horse needed talcum powder to get through a hot summer day. Can you imagine Sacajawea sniffing her way across the Continental Divide? I'm hardly the poster boy for aboriginal pride. I don't even think about my tribal heritage until some white person reminds me of it* (Sh. Alexie "Ten little Indians", p. 134).

In Alexie's short story collections, each story pays attention to what it means to be a particular Indian human being within complex contexts. Narrative itself (Duchan 1995), on one side, is relevant in a post-Postmodern world that has taught readers to play with the interchange between the meanings of difference and difference on a cultural scale. On the other hand, it reflects the Amerindian way of thinking about the

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sense of life, the place of a man in this life, the attitude of the person to nature, and so on so forth.

This theme is also developed in narratives created by Linda Hogan. In her novel-essay "Dwellings" the story is told by the 1st person singular narrator who shares his/her idea about an understanding of the two views of world with the reader:

*It has been my lifelong work to seek an understanding of the two views of world, one as seen by native people and the other as seen by those who are new and young on this continent. It is clear that we have strayed from the treaties we once had with the land and with the animals. It is also clear, and heartening, that in our time there are many – Indian and non-Indian alike – who want to restore and honour these broken agreements* (L. Hogan "Dwellings", p. 11).

The move by Indian and non-Indian people to understand and restore broken treaties with the Earth could clearly be defined as both ecofeminist and environmentalist in nature (Lundquist 2004). However, in the above given excerpt from "Dwellings" Hogan explains that her 'lifelong love for the living world and all its inhabitants' has 'grown' out of her 'native understanding that there is a terrestrial intelligence that lies beyond our human knowing and grasping'.

In highlighting such themes as ethnocultural identity, ethnocultural values, and concepts Amerindian writers try to tell stories from the life of their people and most often tell so called self-stories, as we can see in the excerpt from "Dwellings" given above. So, their narratives are composed with different events told by the narrator/narrators, who was/is the witness of this/that event directly or indirectly as he or she has Amerindian roots.

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Tellability, as Baroni defines it, "is dependent on the nature of specific incidents judged by storytellers to be significant or surprising and worthy of being reported in specific contexts, thus conferring a 'point' on the story" (2014: 836).

Amerindian narratives' tellability has some distinguished features: the narrative canvases are inserted into stories taken from Amerindian folklore (myths and legends) and traditions (the descriptions of festivities and ceremonies). Narrators in such narratives not only tell the legend or myth to involve the reader in the sacred and mythic atmosphere of Amerindian world understanding (Kerr 1978), but also try to resemble this atmosphere by choosing a method of narration that may look like some ceremony.

For instance, the narrative, which is layered with fiction and mythical events changing one another through story, mirrors the pipe ceremony (Fig. 9), which is a sacred ritual for connecting physical and spiritual worlds. In his book "Medicine of the Cherokee. The way of right relationship" (1996) Garrett cites one Amerindian medicine man: "The pipe is a link between the earth and the sky," explains White Deer of Autumn. "Nothing is more sacred. The pipe is our prayers in physical form. **Smoke becomes our words**; it goes out, touches everything, and becomes a part of all there is. The fire in the pipe is the same fire in the sun, which is the source of life." The reason why tobacco is used to connect the worlds is that the plant's roots go deep into the earth, and its smoke rises high into the heavens (1996: 59):

Figure 9. Pipe ceremony (picture available at: https://fineartamerica.com/featured/1st-pipe-ceremony-james-roderick.html)

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Metaphor *Smoke becomes our words*, used by Amerindian Man, is actualized almost in all narratives of contemporary Amerindian writers. If we take, for instance, "Dwellings" by Linda Hogan, the novel essay, which represents not only the complexity of themes told by the narrator, but their eclecticism, which composes the texture of narrative that mirrors perceptions and conceptions of reality. This eclecticism resembles the pipe ceremony, when themes (like rings of smoke) spiral from one another. Here are some excerpts from this novel:

(1) *NOT FAR FROM WHERE I LIVE IS A HILL THAT WAS CUT into by the moving water of a creek. Eroded this way, all that's left of it is a broken wall of earth that contains old roots and pebbles woven together and exposed. Seen from a distance, it is only a rise of raw earth. But up close it is something wonderful, a small cliff dwelling that looks almost as intricate and well-made as those the Anasazi left behind when they vanished mysteriously centuries ago* (L. Hogan "Dwellings", p. 117).

(2) *SITTING IN THE hot sun, watching the small bees fly in and out around the hill, hearing the summer birds, the light breeze, I felt right in the world. I belonged there. I thought of my own dwelling places, those real and those imagined. Once I lived in a town called Manitou, which means 'Great Spirit', and where hot mineral spring water gurgled beneath the streets and rose up into open wells. I felt safe there* (L. Hogan "Dwellings", p. 118-119).

(3) *ONE BEAUTIFUL AFTERNOON, cool and moist, with the kind of yellow light that falls on earth in these arid regions, I waited for barn swallows to return from their daily work of food gathering. Inside the tunnel where they live, hundreds of swallows had mixed their saliva with mud and clay, much like the solitary bees, and formed nests that were perfect as a porter's bowl. At five in the evening, they returned all at once, a dark, flying shadow* (L. Hogan "Dwellings", p. 120-121).

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Following the narrator's interpretation of dwellings, sense of life and the role of the Great Spirit in its creating in the above excerpts from "Dwellings" I find some isomorphism between smoking the pipe when each puff of smoke motivates the smoker to explore a new theme of thinking over at it and the developing of the themes in narratives. The lack of dialogical speech in these narratives justifies that the process of realizing the sense of things goes on in silence. Silence, according to Amerindian mythology, is one of the most significant concepts among the others (Nerburn 1999). Amerindians prefer to sit in a silence to have a chance to communicate with the Creator in their thoughts and dreams.

Discussing iconicity in Amerindian narrative I turn to Schmid's work (2014) devoted to the theme of poetic or ornamental prose in which he explains that analogy between poetic and mythical thought lies in their common tendency to abolish the non-motivation of signs adhered to in realism. Schmid states that "ornamentalism is an artistic icon of myth whereby poetic experience and mythical thought are assumed to be in close harmony" and further that "the word, which is only an arbitrary symbol, tends to become an icon, an image of its own meaning" (2014: 722).

The term 'ornamental prose' I can refer to Amerindian prose as it is the sample of great harmony of reality and myth in the whole textual structure. Mythic and literary characters coexist in it as well as cohere literary and mythic sujet. In other words, poetic links draw a net over the narrative substratum and disclose new aspects and relationships among the narrated situations, characters, and their motifs. It also influences the integration of imaginative thought of verbal art into a fictional-narrative context subordinating to perspectivization of the following events. This fictional myth belongs to the tradition of what Simpson (1978: 662) refers to as the "natural language fantasy", i.e. the fantasy dial 'nature' had established a real connection between signs and the things they signify.

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It can be illustrated in excerpts from Momaday's "House made of dawn", when the sujet of the myth (1) about Santiago who stood for the good of people predicts the main sujet (2) of the text about an Amerindian boy Abel who lives in modern American society and tries to stand for the ethnocultural interests and values of Native Americans:

(1) *Santiago rode southward into Mexico. He rode on for many days, and at last he came to the royal city. That day the king proclaimed that there should be a great celebration and many games, dangerous contests of skill and strength. Santiago entered the games. He was derided at first, for everyone supposed him to be a peon and a fool. But he was victorious, and as a prize he was allowed to choose and marry one of the king's daughters* (N.S. Momaday "House made of dawn", p. 34).

(2) *The late afternoon of the feast of Santiago was still and hot, and there were no clouds in the sky. Abel rode one of his grandfather's man black-maned mares and sat too rigid in the saddle, too careful of the gentle mare. When it came Abel's turn, he made a poor showing, full of caution and gesture. Abel was not used to the game and the white man was too strong and quick for him* <...> (N.S. Momaday "House made of dawn", p. 39).

It looks like sujet paronomasia that the law of mythical thought, as formulated by Cassirer ([1925] 1971: 67), takes effect, according to which "every perceptible similarity is an immediate expression of an identity of essence".

Amerindian prose is just such kind of ornamental prose and its iconicity results from a co-occurrence of poetic and mythical thought. According to Jakobson (1960; 1971) this means that every equivalence of the *signantia* suggests an analogue or contrasting equivalence of the *signata*. Ornamental prose forms crossing points between the two levels: metamorphoses of pure sound patterns into characters and objects, and the narrative transformation of verbal figures into sujet motifs (Schmid 2014).

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The tendency toward iconicity, indeed toward the reification of the signs and their resembling the ethnocultural symbols at the texture of literary narrative, as Schmid (2014: 722) states "ultimately results in a relaxation of the border, strictly drawn in realistic narrative, between words and things, between discourse and story".

Developing Schmid's idea, I try to characterize the narrative structure in prose as an icon. The matter is that in Amerindian prose, iconicity is revealed not only at the level of words, which serve as signs, but also if we take the narrative structure on the whole. In the beginning of my paper I mentioned about Amerindian ethnocultural symbols and artefacts, among which the most significant place the Medicine Wheel takes, most narratives have the composition based on the chiasmus technique with the repetition of key events at the beginning and at the end of the whole story. Such composition represents a narrative frame, which visualizes ethnocultural artefact (see Fig. 1).

For instance, in "House made of dawn":

*There was a house* ***made of dawn****. It was* ***made of pollen*** *and of rain, and the land was very old and everlasting. There were many colors on the hills, and the plain was bright with different-coloured clays and sands* (N.S. Momaday "House made of dawn", p. 1).

*He was running and under his breath he began to sing. There was no sound, and he had no voice; he had only the words of a song. And he went running on the rise of the song. House* ***made of pollen****, house* ***made of dawn***. (N.S. Momaday "House made of dawn", p. 185).

**3. Discussion and conclusion**

Iconicity is a relationship of resemblance or similarity between the two aspects of a sign: its form and its meaning. An iconic sign is one whose form resembles its meaning in some way. The opposite of iconicity is arbitrariness. In an arbitrary sign, the association between form and meaning is based solely on convention; there is nothing

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in the form of the sign that resembles aspects of its meaning. Because iconicity has to do with the properties of signs in general and not only those of linguistic signs, it plays an important role in the field of semiotics – the study of signs and signalling.

However, language is the most pervasive symbolic communicative system used by humans, and the notion of iconicity plays an important role in characterizing the linguistic sign and linguistic systems. Iconicity is also central to the study of literary uses of language, such as prose. The main question concerning the role of iconicity in language is whether a given linguistic sign is iconic or arbitrary. This question was raised several millennia ago regarding the nature of the relationship between the form and the meaning of words. Later on, the scope of the question was expanded to include other types of linguistic entities, such as morphological and syntactic structures.

The given paper touches upon iconicity in the syntax and narrative structures of literary Amerindian texts. Following Fischer's suggested principles of iconicity in syntax, such as analogy, isomorphism, metaphorical shift, etc., which are all iconically based, in my paper I suggest interpreting the role of syntactic structures in revealing ethnocultural meaning visualized by the way of their arrangement. The paper shows that the structure of language in some way reflects the structure of ethnocultural experience. Based on this idea, it can be assumed that typological or cross-linguistic study of language structures can tell us about the structure of human cognition. The paper shows analogical relations between the structure of syntax and narrative and their co-work in verbalizing the meaning and form of ethnocultural artefacts and symbols.

I share Tabakowska's point of view that much recent research has been done into the relationship between the way in which linguistic elements are ordered (their syntax) and the order of human perception, especially in terms of temporal sequencing. However, the relation between form and meaning, between text and conceptual structure, can also be motivated by the 'order of knowledge'. In Amerindian prosaic texts authors exploit the conventions of iconicity in order to impose their ethnocultural

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world-view on the reader/interpreter; that is, they shift their tellability from the perceptual to the conceptual level.

My work gives some perspectives for studying syntactic and narrative iconicity based on ethnocultural knowledge.

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**Résumé**

Iconicity is a term used in semiotics to characterize the relationship of similarity between a sign and the object it represents. In the paper iconicity is understood as a powerful stylistic device and characteristic of narrative in prose. The paper aims at showing that arrangement of the syntactic and narrative structure of the text iconically resembles the Amerindian worldview materialized in ethnocultural artefacts, symbols, and way of telling. At the level of syntax the idea is that grammaticalization of syntactic structures serves as an iconic lexico-grammatical variant representing the concept considered to be an ethnocultural symbol or artefact in the Native American philosophy of life. While illustrating how the structure of the narrative resembles ethnocultural symbols and artefacts, the paper integrates linguocognitive, cognitive cultural and semiotic facets of syntactic and narrative analysis in showing the net of mind and language in highlighting ethnocultural concepts, values, and way of thinking.The paper shows that the structure of language in some way reflects the structure of ethnocultural experience. Based on this idea, it assumes that typological or cross-linguistic study of language structures can tell us about the structure of human cognition. The paper shows analogical relations between the structure of syntax and narrative and their co-work in verbalizing the meaning and form of ethnocultural artefacts and symbols. Text is a set of narratives in which verbal signs imply different information about signified objects. Postmodernist narrative incorporates modes of narration, which at once departs from


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traditional ways of depicting events. The given research highlights some perspectives how the set of narrative events reflects the way of thinking and world understanding resembling the sense of ethnocultural artefacts, concepts, and sense of ceremonies. The paper grounds that mentality is strictly reflected not only at the level of syntax, but at the narrative level as well.

**Keywords**: Amerindian prosaic texts, syntax, narrative, syntactic and narrative structure, iconicity, resembling the meaning.

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