

## **Quantitative Analysis of Literature: Dialogues in Russian Novels of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century**

My paper will be dedicated to certain methodological aspects of the quantitative analysis of literary fiction. In the presentation, I will claim that quantitative, statistical analysis should become an important tool for literary history and theory, as it has the potential of providing quite precise and definite answers for the questions traditionally posed by literary scholars, as well as opening the room for a totally new set of research questions.

To illustrate this methodological statement, I will use my study of the evolution of dialogs in Russian large prose of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The hypothesis is that over the course of the century, during which Russian novel managed to make an incredibly large leap from the first (and rather simple) novelistic attempts of the 1820s to the masterpieces of Tolstoy and Dostoyevsky, the number of dialogs has increased significantly. To test this assumption, I constructed a sample of 500 Russian novels (including also a genre of “povest”). For each of them, a *coefficient of dialogicity*, that is the ratio of the number of cues to the number of words in a text, has been calculated. A subsequent regression analysis clearly indicates that, indeed, during the 19<sup>th</sup> century there was a growth of the number of dialogs in Russian novels.

To explain these finding, I use neuropsychological and narratological theories of interest [Love, McKoon, & Gerrig, 2010; Schultz, 2001]. I claim that dialog is a specific narrative device that is very successful in providing interest for the readers. Therefore, it is logical that novels containing larger numbers of dialogs became more evolutionarily successful and won the competition against their “less dialogical” rivals.

The analysis also shows that there was a relatively small group of “highly dialogical” novels in 1830s, which cannot be explained by the proposed hypothesis. The majority of them are early Russian historical novels. To explain this unexpectedly high dialogicity, I make an assumption that it could have been caused by the influence of foreign historical novels, such of those by Walter Scott or Alfred de Vigny, which were very popular among the Russian readers in 1820–1830s [Altshuller, 1996].

### **References**

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