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## ISHIGURIAN LANGUAGE IN THE NOVELS “AN ARTIST OF THE FLOATING WORLD” AND “THE REMAINS OF THE DAY”

He is an exquisite novelist. I would say if you mix Jane Austen and Franz Kafka you get Ishiguro in a nutshell.  
Sara Danius, a Swedish literary critic and philosopher

**Summary.** Being a Japanese-born British novelist Kazuo Ishiguro is known for negotiating hybrid cultural identities in his writings, which is visibly manifested in his novels “An Artist of the Floating World” and “The Remains of the Day”. Given Ishiguro’s recent Nobel laureate status, examining the Japanese context of his works, verbalized in his language, is topical and relevant to our research. This investigation demonstrates the continued significance of how Ishiguro’s Japanese background informs his ostensibly British novels. The article has been devoted to the study of peculiar Ishigurian language used in these novels. The object of our article is Kazuo Ishiguro’s language shaped by his biography and belonging to both cultures – Japanese and British. The research outlines the dominant linguistic features of Ishigurian language – symbols, metaphors, allusions and specific vocabulary – closely connected with cultural and historical contexts of the given novels. Both novels are compared in terms of the above-mentioned linguistic means. Key symbols include a house (with all its elements and characteristics), a bridge, a road, letters and paintings. Among repetitive metaphors are the butler and the painter representing people dedicated to service and duty over personal fulfilment – a core Japanese value. A significant focus is also on historical (Nazis, Hitler, World War Two, the Cold War as well as societies like the Black Dragon Society and the Cherry Blossom Society) and literary (William Shakespeare and Sherlock Holmes) allusions employed by the author. Use of allusions magnifies the elegiac tone of both novels and leaves ambiguities around their protagonists. The article also identifies different vocabulary used by main characters of both novels. Such central concepts as dignity, service and duty (typical of both novels and valued by both main characters) are singled out and analyzed.

**Key words:** hybrid cultural identity, Ishigurian language, cultural and historical contexts, dominant linguistic features, symbols, metaphors, allusions, central concepts.

Kazuo Ishiguro is considered one of English literature’s most notable contemporary authors having been awarded the 2017 Nobel Prize in Literature. As noted by Pulitzer Prize winner Viet Thanh Nguyen: “*He is both a popular and accessible writer, and yet also one who is smart, sophisticated, inventive, and experimental*” [1]. Ishiguro’s upbringing and Japanese cultural background are woven

distinctly through the novels under analysis. They explore Japanese identity and provide insightful examinations of Japanese history and culture. So, the aim of this research is to analyse Ishigurian language used in these novels and closely connected with the context of his works. Due to lack of investigations of the very language used in Ishiguro’s novels we have decided to explore stylistic devices and expressive means in both novels under analysis.

Language plays a crucial role in the novels of Kazuo Ishiguro, particularly in “*An Artist of the Floating World*” and “*The Remains of the Day*.” Ishiguro employs literary devices like symbolism, metaphor, and other linguistic elements to convey deeper meanings and illuminate inner lives of his characters.

The dominant literary device in the novels is symbolism. Ishiguro “introduces” “*An Artist of the Floating World*” and “*The Remains of the Day*” through a house – in both cases, these luxurious mansions have now fallen into disrepair. In these two stories, we can see the interpretation of the house connected with the problem of professionalism – a wrong interpretation of professional duty.

Thus, Ono managed to buy another house only because the sellers organized a kind of “prestige auction” at which his professional achievements were highly appreciated. However, the war destroyed his family (he lost his wife and son), his house (which now lacks a whole wing), and his prestige.

The houses in which Ono lived throughout his lifetime represent Ono’s professional development, with each move corresponding to a career stage: leaving his parents’ home is part of an ancient initiation rite indicating the child’s transition to a state of spiritual maturity, so Ono’s departure from his merchant father is the starting point of his professional career. The next stage, working in a workshop making “exotic” Japanese paintings for European customers, is closely linked to life in a tiny six-tatami room splattered with paint. The move away from mass-produced “consumerist” painting and towards a bohemian lifestyle is also marked by a move to a new home, a sizeable dilapidated country mansion, where young artists live as they please, exploring a nocturnal world of fleeting pleasures; the only condition imposed on them is loyalty to their teacher and unwavering adherence to his creative guidelines. The rejection of the teacher’s work style leads to an immediate expulsion from home (*the motif of expulsion from Paradise*) and the beginning of the artist’s now wholly independent creative path, in which he

can rely only on himself. This path is quite successful; Ono achieves professional recognition, the material embodiment of which is the house.

Ono, as a typical Japanese, appreciates prestige, status, wealth as well as power and a house is considered a representation of these values. Accordingly, at the beginning of the novel, Ono's house is described as the one "*occupying such a commanding position on the hill*"; "*standing out from all others nearby*"; "*you may find yourself wondering what sort of wealthy man owns it*"; "*fine cedar gateway*"; "*large area bound by the garden wall*"; "*the roof with its elegant tiles and its stylishly carved ridgepole pointing out over the view*"; "*the corridor was so extravagant in its length*" [2, pp. 7–8]. Moreover, a reader finds out that this house used to belong to Akira Sugimura whom Ono mentions with awe, thus taking on the status of his predecessor – "*it was built by my predecessor, and he was none other than Akira Sugimura ... you will learn that for thirty years or so, Sugimura was unquestionably amongst the city's most respected and influential men*" [2, p. 8].

A similar movement "by houses" as steps on the career ladder is also seen in the novel "*The Remains of the Day*." Although there is no detailed description of Stevens' previous places of service, he repeatedly says that the house where the butler serves is the measure of his professional success. We may assume that Stevens' service is not a place where he goes despite his personal needs, but on the contrary, it is the only place where he can calm down or express his suffering. Thus, the service has maternal functions, but it is also the only thing that binds Stevens and his father. Thus, for the butler, the house as a defence against the unfamiliar external world and preservation of his own, as a micro-model of the universe, is his profession.

Windows, the eyes of the house, are crucial for the poetics of Ishiguro's novels, as they indicate the hero's connection with reality. The butler and Miss Kenton watch Stevens Senior from the windows more than once, and it is at this time that they can truly understand and sympathize with him.

A cosy, warm home exists only in the dreams or memories of Ishiguro's heroes. The mythological image of "anti-house" in the images of dungeons and cellars and "coffin rooms" usually represents reality. We can recall the attic room of Stevens Senior, where he sits dressed in full uniform before dawn and dies.

We can see ambivalence in the mythology of the house. Indeed, on the one hand, the house serves as a human "dwelling," and on the other hand, the house can be transformed into a "coffin" ("dwelling of the dead"), as in Ishiguro. This is why "staying in the house" has often been considered "staying in the realm of death." In the case of Ishiguro's protagonists, the "realm of death" is the home of dashed hopes and unrealized expectations. Unable to bear their oppressive atmosphere, characters leave these houses, like Miss Kenton or daughters of Ono, but their owners cannot leave these places, tending to their overly large houses and gardens as if they were tending to their old wounds, nursing their pain.

The readers get to the house via The Bridge of Hesitation. The Bridge of Hesitation is a literal feature, the physical bridge that Ono crosses to get home from the city, and has several symbolic functions. First, it represents Ono's hesitancy as he struggles between opposing forces, the past and the future, his self-image and the truth. This, in turn, has implications for the reader's comprehension of the story, which is vexingly at the mercy of Ono's hesitancy, oblique style of narration; at times, Ono is direct and detailed;

at other times, obscure, revealing information in a piecemeal fashion or not at all so that the reader never feels they have all the information with which to form an opinion.

Also, the bridge symbolizes the district into which it physically led before the war, the city's pleasure district or floating world, a place for which Ono holds a special attachment, connecting him to his blooming artist years, but whose gradual transformation post-war into a district which is unrecognizable to him reminds him of his mortality.

The bridge also functions as a colloquialism, where men would decide whether to seek the pleasures of the district or return home to their wives, a phrase which Ono hints will eventually fall out of use given it will only be of significance to those who, like him, lived in the district before the war.

A similar symbolic meaning carries the road in the novel "*The Remains of the Day*." It represents several key themes and aspects of the protagonist's journey, creating a rich narrative tapestry.

The road symbolizes Mr. Stevens' journey of self-discovery. As he embarks on a physical journey through the English countryside, he is simultaneously on a metaphorical journey to rediscover his identity and understand his life choices. It serves as a conduit for reflection and memory, a backdrop against which he remembers his time as a butler at Darlington Hall and contemplates his decisions during that period.

Nostalgia and regret are also encapsulated in the road's imagery. It becomes a tangible representation of the missed opportunities and sacrifices Mr. Stevens made during his years of service at Darlington Hall. His journey allows him to confront these emotions and come to terms with his past.

Moreover, the road symbolizes repression, reflecting Mr. Stevens' emotional distance as a butler, always prioritizing his duty and professional obligations over his personal life. It signifies the road not taken, encouraging Mr. Stevens to reflect on the opportunities he missed and the paths unexplored, particularly in terms of his personal relationships.

In a broader context, the road represents the English landscape, contributing to the novel's exploration of Englishness and the evolving post-war British society. It embodies the passage of time and the transformation of the nation's societal and cultural fabric.

In both novels, particular objects are responsible for the development of the action. In the novel "*The Remains of the Day*," the letter from Miss Kenton to Mr. Stevens can be persuasively considered a MacGuffin. This narrative device propels the story forward without being intrinsically significant. Several compelling reasons support this interpretation.

The novel intentionally conceals the letter's contents, leaving readers in suspense about what Miss Kenton wrote to Mr. Stevens. This deliberate ambiguity underscores that the letter's content is secondary to its role in the plot. It serves as a mysterious element that piques curiosity without providing definite answers.

The letter serves as a vital motivator for Mr. Stevens, driving him to embark on a journey to reunite with Miss Kenton and address the letter's contents. It prompts him to reflect on their shared past and his own life. However, the letter lacks inherent value or meaning; it is a means to an end, propelling the characters' actions without being fundamentally important.

The central narrative revolves around Mr. Stevens' quest to reunite with Miss Kenton and potentially address the letter's contents. The primary focus is on the journey itself rather than the note. The

letter catalyzes Mr. Stevens' self-discovery and emotional reckoning, much like a MacGuffin that propels the story without being its core.

While the letter contributes to character development by compelling Mr. Stevens to confront his emotions and reevaluate his life choices, its primary function is to illustrate the character's internal struggles and regrets. This aligns with the role of a MacGuffin, motivating characters and advancing the narrative without being the central focus.

The letter's ambiguity, including its unknown contents and significance, follows the typical traits of a MacGuffin. It generates curiosity and intrigue without necessarily offering a clear resolution or answer. The letter remains shrouded in mystery, allowing it to maintain its status as a MacGuffin within the narrative. In Kazuo Ishiguro's novel *"An Artist of the Floating World,"* the paintings can be regarded as a MacGuffin. Several elements within the story support this interpretation.

The content and details of the paintings remain intentionally elusive in the narrative. The descriptions of these artworks could be more concise, and the novel needs to delve into their artistic merits. This ambiguity highlights that the paintings' specific content is not the story's focal point.

The paintings are crucial in motivating the characters and propelling the plot. Masuji Ono, the novel's central character, is primarily driven by his need to suppress and disown his pre-war artistic creations, including these paintings. His motivations revolve around safeguarding his reputation and distancing himself from his earlier actions during the war. The paintings become a means to achieve these personal goals rather than being significant in themselves.

Throughout the narrative, the primary focus is on Ono's self-reflection, post-war Japan's evolving cultural and political landscape, and his interactions with other characters. The paintings serve as a device to explore Ono's character development and the broader themes of responsibility and memory rather than being central to the story.

Symbolically, the paintings represent Ono's past and the broader cultural shift in post-war Japan. They embody the struggle between tradition and modernity and the desire to erase or distance oneself from the past. Their symbolic value takes precedence over their actual content or artistic quality.

The novel leaves many questions about the paintings unanswered, fostering uncertainty and intrigue. This ambiguity aligns with the typical MacGuffin characteristic of generating curiosity without providing concrete answers.

Ambiguity is the fundamental characteristic of Ishiguro's works and allusions create this ambiguity. Though set in different periods, both novels focus on aging protagonists reflecting on their past actions and affiliations during politically turbulent times in Japan.

Several allusions are made in *"The Remains of the Day"* to Lord Darlington's associations with Nazi sympathizers in the 1930s. For example, Stevens refers to "the German gentleman" and "the Herr Bremann," who were guests at Darlington Hall. These vague references allude to the natural British aristocrats like Lord Londonderry, who expressed sympathy for Hitler and hosted him at their homes before WWII. We may note that the fictional Darlington is in part based on figures like Lord Halifax, who saw Nazi Germany as a barrier to Soviet Communism and were inclined to turn a blind eye to Hitler's behaviour in the late 1930s. Ishiguro subtly examines Britain's appeasement policies without heavy-handed exposition through these allusions.

Furthermore, Stevens' admiration for figures like the fictional Nazi apologist Dr. Carlisle highlights his troubled affiliations. According to Stevens, Carlisle published essays arguing that "*Germany was unfairly handicapped*" after WWI and urged "*Anglo-German understanding*." [3, p. 5] This likely alludes to the natural British historian A.J.P. Taylor, who controversially claimed in his 1961 book *Origins of the Second World War* that Hitler's initial territorial claims were justified. Ishiguro uses such allusions to underscore how seemingly reasonable people can end up complicit in atrocities through ignorance and denial.

Meanwhile, in *"An Artist of the Floating World,"* aging painter Masuji Ono also reflects on his past during WWII when he worked as a propagandist. Several implicit allusions are made to Ono's connections with early ultranationalists who provoked violent disagreements around Osaka and Kyoto over whether Japan should expand into China. These vague references likely allude to the real right-wing societies like the Black Dragon Society and the Cherry Blossom Society, which agitated for Japanese imperialism. Ono's early mentors, like the fictional artist Seiji Moriyama, bear similarities to "propagandists Kawakami Hajime and Omura Masujiro," who urged military action abroad [4, p. 12].

One of Ono's possible real-life inspirations could be the sculptor and poet Kotaro Takamura, who used his talents to promote nationalistic ideals in the late 1930s at the government's behest. However, Takamura later composed penitential poetry seeking forgiveness for his wartime collaboration, much like Ono expresses regret over his actions. This reflects the complex attitudes in Japanese society toward artists who once enthusiastically supported the militarist cause.

Ishiguro also uses allusions to classical literature to reinforce themes in the two novels. In *"The Remains of the Day,"* Stevens frequently references Shakespeare and Sherlock Holmes as ideals, yet ironically exhibits none of Holmes' powers of observation and reason. His reference to Othello tragically highlights his capacity for self-deception. Similarly, *"An Artist of the Floating World"* alludes to fleeting ukiyo-e prints, suggesting the unreliability of Ono's selective memories. Furthermore, Ono's grandson referring to *"The Tale of Genji"* highlights his grandfather's isolation from family due to his wartime propaganda [5, p. 6].

The subtlety of Ishiguro's literary and historical allusions magnifies the elegiac tone of both novels while leaving ambiguities around his protagonists' precise guilt. As with the indecisive characters in the works of Tanizaki and Ozu, Ishiguro evokes rather than names, lending his stories a universal quality. He moves the action into a metaphorical realm, disinterested in delineating cultural peculiarities. This parable-like approach aligns with his intent to write not about Japanese or British culture but about regret and complicity through a wider metaphorical lens.

Ultimately, the novels' allusions resonate with the silence of words unspoken and actions never confronted. Ishiguro leaves the precise degree of his conflicted protagonists' guilt open to interpretation. However, the cultural and literary references skilfully evoke a haunting emotional terrain of ambiguity and regret.

Both the butler and the painter serve as metaphors that represent people dedicated to service and duty over personal fulfilment. They subordinate their own desires and emotions to maintain a dignified facade.

Specifically, the butler suppresses feeling and autonomy to perform his professional duties perfectly, becoming "less than human." Similarly, the painter adheres to aesthetic ideals and causes, por-

traying a kind of noble dignity through his art, yet is blind to his personal experience. Their paths diverge, however, when it comes to awareness and redemption. While the painter finds some redemption through the import he places on dignity, the butler remains tragically oblivious to his condition. However, both come to question the true meaning of dignity.

True dignity, the text implies, comes from embracing human emotional experience, questioning values served, and maintaining self-control and determination over one's fate. The metaphors suggest that dignity in blindness serving anything less than this makes one pathetic and undignified.

To sum up, we should say that both novels employ refined, eloquent language that suits the dignified personalities of the main characters. The formal vocabulary mirrors their professionalism and restraint.

However, while Stevens' language in "*The Remains of the Day*" is stiff and cold, reflecting his emotional repression (e.g. "*I did not take Mr Farraday's suggestion at all seriously*"; "*I do not believe I am being unduly boastful*"; "*I believe my judgement proved quite sound on the question of timing*"; "*my witticism would not be easily appreciated by someone who was not aware that it was gypsies who had passed by*", etc., [3, pp. 5–13]) the artist Masuji Ono's words contain more warmth and contemplation as he reminisces (e.g. "*I expressed my gratitude to them*"; "*I could see Miss Sugimura was close to tears*"; "*this made me bitter towards her*"; "*I began to feel pity for her*"; "*I was not surprised to see how saddened she was*"; "*the sight put me in a melancholy mood*"; "*I was glad about Setsuko's decision to remain at home, for indeed, we had had little opportunity to talk without interruption*", etc., [2, pp. 1–28]). Central notions like "dignity", "duty", "service" are key for both – representing the sacrifices and repression of self for purpose. However, Ono more openly grapples with the meaning of such words in light of Japan's changes.

Metaphorical language also features but differs. While Stevens uses the metaphor of "*remains of the day*" to underscore time's fleeting nature and reminisce, Ono's central metaphor of the "*floating world*" epitomizes Japan's cultural impermanence amidst political shifts.

Both novels explore societal change through the lens of their servile occupations. The hierarchical language around class in "*The Remains of the Day*" finds a parallel in Ono's commentary about generational tensions and evolving values in Japan.

Finally, vocabulary invoking memory, reflection and retrospection feature heavily in both narratives, as the characters review past choices. But Ono's contemplative words are more colored by regret, debates of meaning and redemption.

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#### **Бернар Г., Курило С. Мова Кадзуо Ішігуро у романах «Митець хиткого світу» та «Залишок дня»**

**Анотація.** Британський письменник японського походження Кадзуо Ішігуро відомий тим, що у своїх творах презентує гібридні культурні ідентичності, що яскраво проявляється у його романах «Митець хиткого світу» та «Залишок дня». З огляду на нещодавно отриману Нобелівську премію у галузі літератури, вивчення японського контексту його творів, вербалізованого у його мові, є актуальним і релевантним для нашого дослідження. Це дослідження демонструє незмінну важливість того, як японське походження Ішігуро впливає на його британські романи. Стаття присвячена дослідженню своєрідної ішігурської мови, використаної у цих романах. Об'єктом нашої статті є мова Кадзуо Ішігуро, сформована його біографією та приналежністю до обох культур – японської та британської. Дослідження окреслює домінуючі лінгвістичні особливості ішігурської мови – символи, метафори, алюзії та специфічну лексику – тісно пов'язані з культурним та історичним контекстами цих романів. Обидва романи порівнюються з точки зору вищезгаданих мовних засобів. Ключовими символами є будинок (з усіма його елементами та характеристиками), міст, дорога, листи та картини. Серед повторюваних метафор – дворецький і художник, які уособлюють людей, відданих служінню та обов'язку, а не особистій самореалізації, що є основною японською цінністю. Значну увагу також приділено історичним (нацисти, Гітлер, Друга світова війна, Холодна війна, а також такі товариства, як Товариство Чорного Дракона і Товариство Цвітіння Вишні) та літературним (Вільям Шекспір і Шерлок Холмс) алюзіям, які використовує автор. Використання алюзій посилює елегантну тональність обох романів і залишає невизначеність навколо їхніх протагоністів. У статті також визначено різну лексику, яку використовують головні герої обох романів. Виокремлено та проаналізовано такі центральні поняття, як гідність, служіння та обов'язок (характерні для обох романів і цінні для обох персонажів).

**Ключові слова:** гібридна культурна ідентичність, ішігурська мова, культурний та історичний контексти, домінуючі лінгвістичні риси, символи, метафори, алюзії, центральні концепти.