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Gender as a plot of cognition

During the last decade a new research approach based on the social and cultural specific of gender has emerged in Russian linguistics.

Opinion has it that the linguistic tradition which takes into account the category of gender goes back to the ancient world where they began to distinct between the categories of “sexus” and “gender”.

However it would be rightful to assert that tradition of gender roles in social consciousness goes back to the ancient Chinese philosophy with its two main categories - Yin and Yang.

[...]

As any system of symbols reproduces the *configuration* of reality, so obviously “any creation of symbols can’t help finally going back to the general human basis of symbols” [4, p.84].

All that was mentioned above tracks down in particular arguments for gender aspects in the hermeneutic philosophy of cognition and goes back to the main point of problem of understanding oneself *through texts*. “To understand oneself means to understand oneself *in front of text* and to notice from this text states of a certain Self which is different to me” [4, p.87], in other words “hermeneutics has a double task: to reconstruct the inner dynamics of the text and to recreate the ability of the work to come into being in the outer world as an imagination of the world where one could live” [4, p.88].

Hermeneutics offers the way to understand one’s Self through variety of symbols leaved through cultures “in which we receive both existence and speech” [4, p.85].

The approach to gender as to reality which is arranged through signs, symbols and texts (in other words from hermeneutic point of view) gives us the possibility to determine gender as a kind of *interdisciplinary plot* (rus. *mezhdisciplinarnaja intriga*) which is based on overlapping of a great number of human sciences, on not only biological, but also socially and culturally marked human specifics. The plot is a so-called aggregate of circumstances, events and actions in the centre of which is the human, the person.

Gender as an *interdisciplinary plot* goes back on the one hand to Aristotle’s fable (mythos), on the other hand – to the specific mental world created in discourse by P.Sériot [8]. That is

why both plot and discourse are characterized by the same features among which the dominant one is their *intelligibility*, or cognition through intellect, through intellectual intuition in all the significance of this philosophical term [comp. 4, p.63].

Both plot and discourse are originally structured as sequence of elementary propositions which are connected with each other through different logical relations. Elements of both discourse and plot are expounded events, their participants and so-called “non-events”, or: a) circumstances that accompany the events b) the background that elucidates the events c) estimation of the participants of the events d) information that correlates discourse (or plot – *I. Chaleeva*) with the events” [2, p.7].

In this sense the interdisciplinary *paradigm of gender* can be determined as a specific *type of forming the plot* (rus. *tip intrigoobrasovanija*) or – in a rather different focus – as a comparative typology of gender discourses immanent to the nature of traditional culture.

J.S. Stepanov believes that “discourse is language in language”, but which is introduced in a specific social existence [5, p.676].

[...]

Determining discourse as a “specific social existence” and supporting the statement that “any language reflects prejudices of society that is served by this language” [7, p.136], it is reasonable to maintain that gender as paradigm of forming the plot is considered in numerous researches in correlation with different languages and social-cultural discourses.

As an example there is an old English poem for children. It reflects prejudices of society as a kind of specific gender plot, with its “obvious background that appears as a phenomenon of British society”.

What are little girls made of?
Sugar and spice and all things nice. That's
What little girls made of!
What are little boys made of?
Frogs and snails and puppy dogs' tails.
That's what little boys are made of!

In this verse two types of discourse with their rules of social roles, social etiquette, with their semantics of mental world, with their system of reference open up (develop) for the reader/listener.

[...]

But gender plot itself starts to develop just at the moment the researcher goes into discourse further, and here the use of language is “measured” exactly by the *mental space of discourse*.

This space of the plot is – in a rather different focus – a specific “intelligible unity” (P. Riqueur) that creates composition of circumstances, purposes, means, initiatives and unintentional consequences. The world of discourse determines semantic roles of individuals and this also in focus of their correlation with the mental space itself, in other words it determines them as referents.

[...]

It's common knowledge that every society has its communicative structure consisting of system of social roles, institutes, establishments, norms, ways of realization, mediation, preservation and revision of texts. The system of social roles reflects the structure of society. We believe that the system of social roles is one of the main factors which determines gender as a type of forming the plot, which goes back to roles, in other words – to individuals with a typical position in a social structure of this society. Individuals appear as social existence itself.

[...]

In conclusion it should be mentioned that in this article was made an attempt to explain the most progressive – from author's point of view – trend of gender research in Russia.

The main thesis of arguments about gender suggested by the author is that the research of socially and culturally marked specifics of gender is possible only by creating and acknowledging the interdisciplinary paradigm.

By determining gender as a specific type of forming the plot and by acknowledging the plot as intelligible essence the author supports the necessity of researching gender from cognitive positions and first of all in focus of hermeneutics because the latter affords to build up corresponding models of *interpreting* gender discourses as mental spaces that could replace possible worlds and situations.

One of the most important arguments by acknowledging the gender type of the plot of cognition is its turning to the person, to his socially and culturally marked nature.

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