

THE USE OF THE STRUCTURAL METHODOLOGY PRINCIPLES IN GENDER STUDIES

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The author proves that past and current gender studies are based on the structural methodology. The paper emphasizes the features of Ukrainian gender studies and their relation to this methodology. The results of this investigation give the possibility to use the structural methodology principles in various fields of humanities and create the analysis methods of modern discursive practices.

Key words: difference, gender, deconstruction, women's studies, cyborgs, structure, transgression, feminism.

ЗАСТОСУВАННЯ ПРИНЦИПІВ СТРУКТУРНОЇ МЕТОДОЛОГІЇ В ГЕНДЕРНИХ СТУДІЯХ

Світлана Повторєва

Доведено, що гендерні студії у своїх витках і на сучасному етапі істотно спираються на структурну методологію. Акцентовано особливості українських гендерних досліджень і їх зв'язок з цією методологією. Отримані результати дають можливість використовувати принципи структурної методології у різних сферах гуманітарного знання, створювати методики аналізу сучасних дискурсивних практик.

Ключові слова: відмінність, гендер, деконструкція, жіночі студії, кіборги, структура, трансгресія, фемінізм.

Due to the fact that gender studies are at the forefront of modern science, they affect all areas of modern Western culture: politics, law, business, education, literature and art, penetrating everyday life and gradually leading to significant changes in the outlook. These studies have challenged the fundamental paradigms of Western metaphysics. Despite a large number of publications on gender issues in general, and women's studies in particular (J. Kristeva [15], S. Benhabib, J. Butler, D. Corner, N. Fraser [26], O. Hurko [5], H. Cixous [26], D. Haraway [29], E. Ann Kaplan [32], JLPapart [33], some authors try to understand the bases of their own methodologies. There are also papers in which the study correlates with the principles of the methodological structure (N. S. Avtonomova [1], Y. Zhrebkyna [7], H. Zhyru [8], T. Klymenkova [12], U. Kendes, [13], E. E. Keplen [14], M. Messner [16], J. Butler [25], H. Cixous [28]. Meanwhile, the analysis of works belonging to the gender trend shows a clear conscious or unconscious use of these different methodologies.

Among a variety of methodological principles used in these studies, the author tries to identify the ones belonging to the structural methodology, assuming that they clearly represent the essence of the gender trend in human cognition. Its various forms (structuralism and post-structuralism) involved in the formation of the conceptual structure and issues of women's studies, in

which the key concept is the destabilization of the humanist subject, questioned the relevance and epistemological possibilities of grand narratives, values and binary oppositions of Western metaphysics [14, p. 154].

The *aim* of the paper is to use the main principles of the structural analysis in gender studies in order to show its constructive possibilities and its ability to solve basic contradictions and conflicts found in the modern Western European discourse and humanitarian studies of Ukraine, America, etc.

The term "gender" has become the basic category of women's studies. In earlier gender studies "gender" and "sex" were clearly delineated. A significant contribution to the theoretical distinction between them was made by Simone de Beauvoir who originated the idea that a woman isn't born but becomes a woman [3, p. 302]. The term "gender" encompasses much broader range of qualities and relations than "sex" that characterize human life. Most scholars point to the systematic and structural characteristics of the concept of "gender" and associate it with social relationships.

In the structural methodology, developed on the model of Ferdinand de Saussure's linguistics and his followers and applied in many fields of human knowledge, there are some fundamental principles that the author of this article has defined and analyzed in a number of her

publications [19; 20; 21]. These structuring principles and their relation to language differences, deconstruction and other transgressions prove the fact that the scientific methodology presented structuralism and post-structuralism which are widely used in gender studies [12, p. 60]. It is interesting to follow how these principles “work”.

Let us consider the structuring principle and its relation to the language in the context of gender studies. That structure can be represented in terms of oppositions and differences no matter what elements filled valence formed in the system of oppositions and differences; the structural methodology was made to fit various binding sites, leading them to constant models to analyze the structural integrity [6, p. 352]. The specificity of structuralism is the use of language and certain ways of learning as the basis of scholarship in other areas of human knowledge or understanding by analogy with the language as a sign system [1, p. 10]. In this regard, it should be noted that international gender and women’s studies began spreading, especially after the publication of the Yu. Kristeva’s book “Desire in Language” [31], in which she performed a parallel analysis of linguistics and related structures, based on the psychoanalytic model of S. Freud and Lacan’s versions. The researcher shows that desire and language are recreated in the family, mutually influencing each other and structuring personality. Gender is one of the most effective structures because due to the formation and destruction of language it makes social, historical and role classifications influencing the relationships in human societies. People are determined largely by the cultural context and systems of values. They “live in the world of structures that significantly limit their ability level and influence their thoughts and behavior, although not completely” [12, p. 62]. This role, for example, creates the opposition “man-woman”. Yu. Kristeva considers this construct of gender positions, making it the poststructuralist deconstruction. According to the researcher, the concept of “woman” cannot be considered in relation to some constant, but only to the structure formed by the socio-historical course. Kristeva claims that “to assume that “you are a woman” is hardly less absurd than to believe that “you are a man” [15, p. 456]. This statement emphasizes the negativity that exists only in opposition “man-woman”. The artificiality of this construct allows us to assert that it is historically fluid and it is subject to change.

The interpretation of language as a structural basis in the gender aspect of life is revealed in the work of O. Zabuzhko, known not only in Ukraine but also in Europe, where she is called “the creator of the postmodern novel”. In her most famous artistic and philosophical work “The Field Work in Ukrainian Sex” she emphasizes, “the house – language ... is always with you, like a snail and other non transportable house that doesn’t belong to you” [9, p. 16]. The language characterized by distinct structural

features is spherical and it is perceived as a house lit up at night. O. Zabuzhko provides language security features, the establishment of women’s self-identity and human dignity.

The unusual properties of the language have been discovered by the founder of structural linguistics Ferdinand de Saussure in his research about anagrams [23]. It was the forerunner of many works of Indo-European poetic language and Comparative Poetics, which engaged his student M. Meyye and later R. Jakobson [11, p.637] and other members of structuralism and post-structuralism. According to Yu. Kristeva, M. F. de Saussure made a shift in distinction between a language and metalanguage to an object language which appeared to be different from any logical or psychological act. Language understanding has evolved into the direction approaching the process where it operates with the body. Yu. Kristeva calls the shift in language thinking a “geentext”. This shift let F. de Saussure in the “Heart of Ignorance” [15, p. 263]. In the works of some poets and thinkers (Artaud, Lotremona, Mallarme, Bataille, V. Hlyebnikova etc.) the criticism of the state, family and religion is so obvious and heartbreaking that the usual communication destroys the language structure itself. The language containing a riot, shouting, gestures is often regarded as esoteric, unreadable and elite [15, p. 455]. However, Yu. Kristeva considers the language that rejects the traditional society because it is encrypted. The society exhibits its mood or kills the important mechanism for the creation of the new discourse (it concerns both women and minorities) and thus fundamental changes in the society. Poetic language destroys and restores the social responsibility. It is a crisis discourse, so its theoretical analysis is required to realize these features and its prognostic role in the society. Such philosophical and theoretical studies (based on the structural methodology) need to change the traditional critical and conceptual apparatus as in the existing practices classical methods of thinking have a privileged status since stability is better than crisis [15, p. 455].

One of the main structural relations and constructive principles of the linguistic structures is the difference. Structuralism and post-structuralism in particular are sometimes regarded as the fundamental principles of distinction in non-classical philosophy. This is demonstrated by the fact that the philosophical discourse (which includes structuralism, postmodernism, poststructuralism) is based on the structural methodology, sometimes referred to as the philosophy of difference. This emphasizes the contrast between this kind of philosophizing and the Postnonclassical methodology which is known as “the philosophy of identity”. The principle differences are methodologically significant in the advanced direction of gender studies – women’s studies, presented by L. Irihary, Yu. Kristeva, H. Cixous etc. The principle differences in advanced areas of gender studies remain dominant and

gain the methodological significance. The famous scholar I. Zherebkina analyzes the phenomenon of postfeminism. One of its most significant features marks the “reinventing of sexual differences and other types of differences (class, racial and national) within the structure of female subjectivity” [7, p. 233].

In accordance with the principle of distinction, women should not be considered equal to men, as it was typical for the position of Simone de Beauvoir. Women should perceive their identity as something given from the beginning and inevitably stress their differences from men, since only in this case, women are able to express themselves and be self-sufficient human beings with their own demeanor and personal opinion. Women should be given an opportunity to develop differences. Therefore, it is necessary to seek for the areas in which female subjectivity can be clearly delineated. Women’s studies are part of post-structuralism, as it comprises not only important issues presented by women, but also shows the uniqueness of the women’s discourse while the male discourse is rather obvious. The creativity of L. Iriharya and E. Sisu et al. is an attempt to develop a style of women’s writing and the practice of female literature, undermining falocentrism and logocentrism which are dominant in the discourse of the classical Western culture. They are based on the rethinking of some concepts by L. Altyusera, Zh. Derrida and Zh. Laksana who believe that the imperative of such studies is the fact that women overcome the repressive concept of identity of Western thought. H. Cixous wants to find the essence of feminine delight [18, p. 389]. It is seen as something diverse, fluid, non-hierarchical and characteristic mostly of women. Women are more capable than men to give voice to this principle and thus discursively end the dominance of classical metaphysics which is exclusively masculine.

The difference principle is used as a basis in Yu. Kristeva’s research on gender issues. It undermines the traditional ideas about women, showing that they are dependent on men and their paternalism. The researcher is dissatisfied with the information that the U.S. feminist journals contain and examines the titles of publications (“Our Bodies”, “All Women”, “Notes from the Third Year: Women’s Liberation”, “Sister” etc.) to distinguish underlying trend developments. In its most general form it is characterized as a process in which “destructure takes precedence over structure” [15, p. 455]. Through a deeper understanding of gender differences Kristeva considers psychoanalysis in its current form (Zh. Lakan’s version).

There is considerable interest in gender issues in the contemporary Ukrainian art and philosophical discourse [2, 4, 9, 17, 18, etc.]. In her works O. Zabuzhko actively pursues the idea of the difference between women and men. The author defends the position of women as

identity [10, p. 7, 112, 120]. Exploring the life and work of Lesia Ukrainka, Zabuzhko demonstrates the inadequacy of common personality assessments of Ukrainian poetry and considers these positions as the patriarchal authoritative discourse which “provides a continued focus on the men’s world as the major sanctioning authority” [10, p. 117]. According to this discourse, in Ukrainian culture there was created a myth about Lesia Ukrainka as a sick, sexually ugly and loveless girl who therefore remained an impeccable virgin and had platonic love for women, including O. Kobylanska [10, p. 114]. Refuting these myths, O. Zabuzhko proves that Lesia Ukrainka belongs to the feminist generation, in which creative women realized their difference from men and their own identity and didn’t consider themselves to be dependent on men. The Ukrainian poetess “rejects the attitude towards her as a woman of minority and this is an undeniable revolt against the established order of gender subordination” [10, p. 118].

The principle of transgression has an important methodological significance in gender studies. It means overcoming boundaries and going beyond certain well-established structures. The category boundaries, directly related to the question of language and history, serve as the prototype for the cultural and educational research. This principle is closely related to the understanding of the structural differences since borders are created only on the basis of difference. Through the understanding of the boundaries of the discursive formations they undergo transition. However, the notion of transgression means that the established dominance within the existing limits may be challenged and redefined through various forms of transgression [8, p. 81].

O. Zabuzhko argues the borders created by the traditional social hierarchy, male domination, tyranny of men and the power of the father (a natural phenomenon). Oppression happens when a man tends to deprive a woman of mystery, roughly interfering in her secret life. There is no much difference whether it is a relationship with her father or man. The hero of the novel “The Field Work in Ukrainian Sex” suffers from a constant desire to “escape from the family nest which walls are surrounded by the caustic fear” [9, p. 128]. The authoritative father fatally structures the feminine life and social hierarchy in which men occupy dominant positions and it leads to the formation of the corresponding attitude. They “all need to win where a business is without hypocrisy...” [9, p. 21].

In the work “Notre Dame d’Ukraine: Ukrainian woman in the conflict of mythologies” [10] dedicated to Lesia Ukrainka, O. Zabuzhko writes that “the people’s culture no longer accepts blocking and non-religious consciousness” [10, p. 12]. Being a prominent writer of vision, O. Zabuzhko appears to be a transgressor who made the transition boundaries in the patriarchal society ideologically and discursively (through creative writing)

as well as in her personal life. She could overcome gender boundaries. Through understanding their feminine and creative, Lesia Ukrainka crosses a series of rapids created by the society for women of her status. With the mutiny against the wishes of the parents, an act that is contrary to all the customary standards that women have to follow, their nobility status “was tapping on the bare ground of human existence” [10, p. 88]. It is an expression of the strong autocratic spirit that is able to say to all authoritarian power structures “No!” [10, p. 88].

Thus, the principle of transgression in the context of gender studies means moving beyond the dominant male discourse to the discourse of women’s creation. In one of the well known research papers on these issues D. Harevey calls to “break the boundaries and take responsibility for the construction of the borders” and “rejoice at permutations of the borders and take responsibility for their construction”. This formulation had a significant impact on the destruction and undermining of the traditional binary oppositions of the Western discourse as it promoted awareness of the community representatives of feminism and essential dualism of the Western tradition. It has led to the domination over women, people with dark skin, nature, workers and animals. D. Harevey believes that gender, race, or class consciousness is the achievement having a terrible historical experience of contradictory social realities of patriarchy, colonialism, racism and capitalism. It is the category of gender subjected to the structural analysis, since it is extremely difficult and based on the controversial reproductive scientific discourses and other social practices [14, p. 161].

D. Harevey sees a real possibility of overcoming the boundaries in promoting the social development and high-tech culture that challenges all varieties of dualism in an unusual way. In the context of this new culture (cyberworld), it is unclear who the creator is and who is created in the relationship between man and machine. It is also uncertain what the mind and body are when it comes to cars involved in practical encoding. In this world of feminism it is necessary to find ways and means of resistance, getting into the very heart of the cybernetic field (“Belly Monsters”). “Cyborg imagery can suggest a way out of the maze dualism in which we explain our bodies and our tools to ourselves. It means both building and destroying machines, identities, categories, relationships, volumes and narrations” [14, p. 161].

The scholar devoted her work “A Cyborg Manifesto” [30] to the development of these ideas which have become widespread in western humanities. This work is written in accordance with the principle of transgression in the context of women’s studies. D. Harevey says, “My myth of the cyborg is a myth that crossed the boundaries of a large-scale merger and dangerous possibility that progressive people might explore, thus completing a substantial part of the

necessary political work” [14, p. 161–162]. “A Cyborg Manifesto” is a call for unity to resist the threat of the world domination which is seen in the government created by men for the unknown state which could be called feminine. D. Harevey discovered a wide space before the researchers of the feminist orientation in the field of gender issues, race, ethnicity and sex in the context of threatening military, scientific, corporate and technological problems.

The principle of gender studies deconstruction plays an important role. The concept of deconstruction was introduced by the representative of poststructuralism Zh. Derrida in the book “Of Grammatology” [Derrida J. *De la Grammatologie*. – Paris: Les Edition de Minuit, 1967] which reflects the main ideas of the French philosopher. According to the classical ideas, a transcendental signified, which is about the subjective reality, is a form of presence. Unlike this opinion, Zh. Derrida claims, “It has never been a transcendental or privileged signified and thus the field or game of signification no longer limits” [6, p. 567]. Signified words (language, voice, writing, etc.) are never neutral. Very significant interpretation forms create meaning. According to Derrida, the method of searching for the meaning isn’t an absolute search for hidden or transcendental marks but for the analysis of the level signifier that reveals the origin of the meaning in the language forms of the game, written words and grammatical structures. Considering the examples, we should demystify them and find out their story manifestation.

The principle of deconstruction is interpreted in different ways. It is directly applied by the gender. D. Butler notes that “there is no gender identity and gender expression outside, this identity is essentially determined by the “expression” which is the result ...” [25, p. 25]. There are attempts to undermine the accepted sexual category in women’s studies. H. Sisu and Yu. Kristeva established theoretical texts that radically deny their subject. The discourses are not hierarchically ordered and the rigid binary oppositions are neglected. In their works they use the structural principle and raise a question of the woman’s body. The task of gender studies is the deconstructed surface phenomena to expose the hidden inner structure. Abstract explanations are ignored. It is believed that the study of how they can do nothing rather than describe the experience of the researcher affects the arguments of others, encourages them to take action: laugh, participate or get satisfaction. Deconstruction in H. Sisu’s philosophy of sexual difference is based on the line search procedure of the phallogocentric gap in literature. In the metaphysical oppositions of the western world she tries to change the structural dependence of one member of the opposition to the other and terminate their relationship with the usual rule in the hierarchy of one over the other [18, p. 389].

Prospects of research. The use of the principle of structural methodology will help to form the basis of gender studies in Ukraine and spread these ideas in the Ukrainian humanitarian discourse.

Conclusions:

1. The starting point of the structured methodology is the proposition that the social world is made of values created and accepted by people.

2. Gender studies of the past and present are mostly based on the structural methodology.

3. Fundamental gender studies have a number of structural methodology principles. These principles are used in Ukrainian gender studies, particularly in women's studies.

4. The structural methodology serves an informed practical action attempting to change the world by understanding constantly changing hidden structures.

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