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FRONTIER CONCEPT IN POSTMODERN LITERARY DISCOURSE

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Abstract

The article offers a comprehensive analysis of the frontier concept in the context of the anthropocentric paradigm of modern scientific knowledge. The relevance of the topic is determined by the demand for new approaches to the description and interpretation of frontier discursive practices and discourse of the frontier as such; alternative approaches and ways of interpreting the text. In this regard, it is relevant to study the multi-aspect content of the frontier, as a separate semiotic system, the system-forming and functional unit of which is the frontema. The research was carried out within the framework of postmodern literary discourse, which seeks to destroy generally accepted norms and rules, dehumanize discourse to a state of frontier. The discussion of the research results is presented in the form of comments on the texts of modern English writers' works, from the standpoint of the "frontier" approach to the interpretation of the text. The study uses an integrated approach that combines the methods of linguosemantic, semiotic and conceptual analysis with the methods of discourse analysis of the text. The article distinguishes between the traditional and the new interpretation of the concept of "frontier", formulates the definition of the frontier as a field of formation of meanings and cognitive-interpretive space of a text that has the potential ability of multiple meaning genesis. The main characteristics of the frontier as a cognitively discursive universal are given, its integral features are described, and the term frontema is introduced, denoting the main unit of this discourse.

1. Introduction

In the context of a rapidly developing socio-cultural cyberspace and simplification of state borders in the world, there is an active interaction of cultures and civilizations, which leads to their meeting, an "unexpected collision" of opposites, meanings and notions, which forms an area of cultures that does not intersect with it in its meaning (Lotman, 1992), called the frontier. Initially, the chronotope of the frontier was a mobile, constantly moving to the West border between the part of America that had been developed by civilization and the native territory. The concept of frontier is traditionally present in historiography, geography, anthropology, cultural studies, linguistic and cultural studies, sociolinguistics, psychology, literary criticism and acts as an integral socio-cultural phenomenon and the main constituent element of national identity, which is actualized in various discourses – literary, cultural, political and media discourse. The concept of a "moving border" is becoming more and more relevant within the framework of the anthropocentric linguistic paradigm, which is intensively expanding the sphere of its interests and is focused on identifying connections and relationships between language and reality. This reality is formed in the process of discourse and is its product (Angermuller, 2015; van Dijk, 1997, 2013; Foucault, 1996; Tylor, 2014).

2. Problem Statement

According to Laclos and Mouffe (as cited in Phillips & Jorgensen, 2008), no discourse is closed and complete, continuously changing in contact with other discourses, and its meaning cannot be constant due to the variability of language. It reflects the variability of the world, creates and changes it. The structure and content of the concept of "frontier" has also undergone transformation. The phenomenon of the frontier is described in the works of domestic and foreign authors as a cultural and historical category (Ivanova, 2008), as a theme and approach to interpretation in literary discourse (Domansky, 2017; Markov, 2017), in political discourse (Benoist, 2016), the network frontier (Dovbysh, 2016), in sociological discourse – ethnocultural frontier (Grigorichev & Guzei, 2017), in the field of psycho- and ethno-linguistics (Krasnykh, 2002). However, as noted by Basalaeva (2012), there is still no clear definition of the frontier, its main constituent features and identification criteria have not been identified, which is the basis for considering the frontier as a discursive universal and as a discourse. In order to identify the integral features of the frontier discourse, we have highlighted frontema – the linguistic-cognitive unit of its content.

The article studies modern literary discourse, which has a complex intertextual and interdiscursive nature, as the research material. The discussion of the main provisions of the work is carried out on the material of the texts of the works of modern English authors – Tom Stoppard "Arcadia" (1993), Salman Rushdie "Midnight's Children" (1981) and V.S. Naipaul "Half a Life" (2001).

3. Research Questions

3.1. Frontier as an interdiscursive universal: a linguistic-pragmatic aspect

In contrast to the classical ontology, which opposes him an existence and consciousness, as well as a purely linguistic definition of discourse as "a coherent text in combination with extralinguistic – pragmatic, sociocultural, psychological and other factors" (Arutyunova, 1999, pp. 136-137), we adhere to the attitudes of non-classical philosophy of the approach that considers discourse as an area of meeting of language and reality, existence and thinking, calling this area a frontier. A similar understanding of discourse is presented in M. Foucault's interpretation: "Discourse is a thin contacting surface that brings language and reality closer together, mixing vocabulary and experience" (Foucault, 1996, p. 49). Taking into account the numerous definitions of discourse formulated by domestic and foreign scholars (Demyankov, 2005; van Dijk, 1997, 2013; Heffer 2015; Karasik, 2007; Plotnikova, 2006; Schiffrin, 2006), let us dwell on the relevant text and discourse. According to the general opinion, researchers, discourse and text are linked by the relationship of "performance", in which the text is a representation of one or more discourses (Kress, 1989), as a "linguistic product of discursive practice" (Rosulek, 2015). Heffer (2015) identifies three essential components of discourse as a communication process – speaker / writer, text, and addressee. Each element has its own functional content – for the text it is the meaning, for the speaker / writer – the intention, for the addressee – the interpretation of the meaning of the text and, therefore, the intentions of the speaker / writer of the discourse participant. Moreover, the intention and interpretation differ under the influence of the context and the linguo-cognitive competence of the recipient. Taking into account the relationship between discourse and text, we agree with Kasavin (2009), who defines discourse as "an intermediary link between text and context, allowing <...> to give meaning to the text and the world around it" (p. 54). Considering discourse as a set of linguo-social practices that have a dynamic nature and are carried out in a linguo-cultural context, we note that in any discourse there comes such a moment of interaction of speech practices and contexts when discourse enters the area of the frontier.

The peculiarity of the frontier is that, unlike the border that divides, the frontier unites, correlates, and compares the opposites. In the linguo-pragmatic aspect, the frontier is the area of existence of discourses coming into contact and changing in the process of the struggle, which leads to a change in meanings, the emergence of new discourses that determine the ways of communication and understanding the world. The multiperspectivity of modern consciousness leads to changes in discourses – discursive polyphony, creating discursive patterns that transform into discursive practices (Fairclough, 1989). The frontier, according to Laclos and Mouffe (as cited in Phillips & Jorgensen, 2008), is a discursive practice, the process of meeting and interaction of various patterns (discourses) during which new meanings are acquired and existing meanings are transformed, initiating the struggle of discourses. The motivation for such a struggle is most often ideological dominance, and the reason are social or personal motives.

3.2. The concept of a frontier in postmodern literary discourse: a metalanguage game

In literary discourse, the frontier acts as a cultural and cognitive space which carries out the discursive practices of writing (author), reading (reader) and interpretation (reader, critic). The frontier space is a mobile system, the structure-forming element of which is the frontema – a cognitive-linguistic

discursive unit that has a verbal (or non-verbal) plan of expression, explicitly or implicitly indicating the situation of the frontier at the linguistic, semantic, pragmatic level, or semi-opaque levels-, images, plot. Frontema can act as an interdiscursive unit, transforming formally and semantically in various discourses.

In postmodern literary discourse, frontier discursive practices are carried out on the basis of a language game, the result of which is irony that arises in the context of culture, when discourse contrasts with generally accepted ideas and conventions, destroying all kinds of taboos and breaking laws (Pigulevsky, 2002). Irony in postmodern literary discourse is impersonal and turns into a metalanguage game, which we observe in the first act of the play by the English playwright Tom Stoppard "Arcadia". The chronotope of the discourse is the English estate of the early 19th century. Thirteen-year-old Thomasina learns about the adultery of her teacher, Septimus Hodge and Mrs. Chater, and tries to be ironic about it, pretending not to understand the meaning of the word carnal: "Septimus, what is carnal embrace?" (Stoppard, 2008) With this question, Thomasina engages the interlocutor in a metalanguage game based on the semantic meaning of the lexeme carnal, which has the denotative meaning *carnal* and the connotation *sinful*, waiting for explanations in such a pragmatic context. At the same time, the teacher, trying to avoid the delicate discussing such a topic with a teenage girl offers an explanation that moves discourse into the frontier: "*Carnal embrace is the practice of throwing one's arms around a side of beef*" (Stoppard, 2008). Within the framework of one discursive practice, binary opposite pragmatic contexts are formed, touching in the discursive area of the frontier. It creates a metalanguage game based on the difference in meanings of the lexeme carnal and the context of their use in discourse, which creates an ironic effect. Further, the discourse continues in the frontier, creates a multi-aspect game at the linguo-cognitive level, and generates meaning in the mind of the reader, depending on his intellectual-cognitive characteristics.

3.3. Semiotic characteristics of the frontier in postmodern literary discourse

In the semiotic aspect, the frontier is understood as a mobile area of discourse existence, in which signs acquire their meanings when correlating with other signs. Social actions, when compared with other social actions, form the axiological characteristic of discourse, expressed in binary oppositions *we* and *the other*, *east* and *west*, *civilization* and *savagery*, *the Old World* and *the New World*. The semiotic frames of the frontier can be both social and personal.

The frontier nature of postmodern discourse is expressed in the form of transgression – the desire to go beyond the boundaries of the discursive field, to cross the border of what is permitted and what is not permitted, being outside discourse, using such techniques as magical realism, fragmentation, and time shifts. An example is the ability of Salim Sinai, the protagonist in Salman Rushdie's novel Midnight Children, to simultaneously hear the voices of children, who were born at midnight on August 15, 1947 like him: "*And then noise deafening many tongued terrifying, inside his head*! ... (Rushdie, 2013). Transgression is enhanced by the interaction of front-chronotopes and action codes – the acquisition of state independence and what is happening in the child's head; the bedside table with dirty linen, in which he hid while watching the masturbating mother. It puts the discourse into a state of frontier and keeps it there throughout the story, through a combination of magic and reality. Changing the face of the narrator as a participant in the discourse from *he* to *I* also contributes to the creation of a frontier atmosphere. Another semiotic characteristic of the frontier is the actualization of intertextual connections in the reader's cognitive space and their transformation into interdiscursive relations. According to Y. Kristeva,

"*any text is a product of absorption and transformation of some other text*" (Kristeva, 2004), which creates a frontier domain with its chronotope, personalities, images, symbols, in order to force the reader to leave other discourses and Move completely to the frontier area.

4. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to define the frontier as a borderline linguo-cognitive state of discourse and a discourse-forming construct; identify its main characteristics and define frontier as a universal property of discourse in linguistic, pragmatic, and semiotic aspects. Last but not least, it also aims to define the frontier as a sense-forming space in postmodern literary discourse.

5. Research Methods

The research was carried out on the basis of an integrated approach combining the methods of semantic, linguo-cognitive, conceptual, and interpretive analysis with the method of linguistic and cultural discourse analysis.

6. Findings

As the results of the research, the article presents a fragmentary application of the frontier approach to the interpretation of postmodern literary discourse based on the text of the novel by V.S. Naipaul "Half a Life", in which the discourse of the frontier is explicated at the level of chronotope, linguistic-cultural identities of characters, images and symbols.

All three cultural and social locations in which the action takes place in the novel – India in the late 1940s, London in the 1950s, a country in South Africa, according to descriptions, reminiscent of Mozambique of the 1970s, in the indicated time intervals, are frontier zones due to socio-political and cultural transformations.

As the action moves from India to London, the discursive area of the frontier is given by frontems of two types: a description of the city and socio-cultural space in the light of its perception by the protagonist. A young twenty-year-old Hindu who graduated from a missionary school only knows that London is a big, great city (He knew that London was a great city), which in his mind looks like a dazzling magnificent fairyland (fairyland of splendor and dazzle) – place frontema. However, he felt let down walking on the streets – the border between the known and the unknown – frontema of the socio-cultural space.

Further, the author places the hero in the frontier area, where the reader observes the interaction of the city's discourses and the hero's personality: "His ignorance seemed to widen with everything he read. <…> Willie thought he was swimming in ignorance, had lived without a knowledge of time" (Naipaul, 2001, p. 150). The lexeme "ignorance" acts as a cognitive frontema, which is the border between the old known world and the new. "Ignorance" in this context means "ignorance", "unawareness", "lack of knowledge" and in combination with the verb "widen" meaning to expand or increase, it sounds paradoxical. The more a person reads, the more knowledge he acquires. We are talking about the

historical and cultural tradition: "without a knowledge of time" – knowing nothing about the past, Willie cannot understand the present and is in the socio-cultural locus of the frontier, as indicated by the fronts: "he began to understand he was free" and "to present himself as he wished". Each of these phrases can act as a frontier, indicating a boundary situation that has the length and dynamics of the frontier – "began to understand" means that understanding did not come to him immediately, but gradually over a certain period of time. And the second frontema – "to present himself" means "to introduce yourself" in front of someone else, which can be "whatever he wants". Later, in another frontier locus – in the African country, Willie will say: "We can judge only by what we know" (Naipaul, 2001, p. 150), outlining the ontological chronotope of discourse, outside of which we cannot judge anything, since we have no knowledge about it.

Frontems are the main character himself and other characters – "exotics" and "mixed race people", as well as images – Land-Rover, estate, bush. Land-Rover acts as an image of a frontal civilization and its penetration into "savagery". Estate – a manor, an estate in Africa is an image of the colonial regime, which is coming to an end. The bright frontier image – the bush – not only explicitly names the frontier space, but also evokes certain connotations associated with it – danger, physical difficulties, uncertainty, virginity of nature, savagery, lack of civilization, impossibility of communication, isolation.

At the semiotic level, let us single out the ethno-social frontems that indicate a borderline social status – these are lexemes caste, Brahmin (brahmana – a representative of the highest caste in India), dalit (from the untouchable caste), *Parsi* (people from South Asia). In a certain pragmatic context, these lexemes acquire an appropriate social connotation and associated personality characteristics.

7. Conclusion

The frontier as a cognitive-discursive universal is explicated in postmodern literary discourse as an area of meaning genesis of a literary text, read by the reader, in which the decoding of cultural and semiotic codes and images of the text – frontems and the formation of the ideological content of the work takes place. Frontems are linguistic-cognitive constructs at lexical, pragmatic, and semiotic levels that perform a transgressive function that initiates the transition of discourse to the area of the frontier.

Frontems act as both discourse and interdiscursive universal. The frontier is positioned as an independent object of linguo-cognitive research and is viewed as a mobile boundary area of contact and interaction of cultural codes and meanings, giving rise to the "struggle of discourses" and the birth of new meanings.

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