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REFLEXIVITY, REFLECTION AND METALANGUAGE AS ASPECTS OF LANGUAGE PERSONALITY IN IRIS MURDOCH'S *THE SANDCASTLE*

In the current study we would like to look closer at such notions as reflexivity, reflection and metalanguage and reveal linguistic, philosophic and psychological theories behind them that will enable us to understand the nature and functions of linguistic reflexivity and metalanguage in the novel of Iris Murdoch *The Sandcastle*.

Reflexivity is the notion often used by the modern philosophers who study the contemporary worldview. Psychologically, reflexivity is "the mental development that is directed towards the person's perception of the self, i.e. his or her behavior, actions and deeds, states of mind, feelings, potentialities, character and other features of one's own personality" [6, 300]. It can be said that reflexivity is the directedness towards the self.

A. Sharov states that the process of reflexivity is "the correlation and synchronization of direct and back intentional psychic activities, which results in setting and organizing the direct intentional activity as a psychological mechanism of character regulation" [7, 76]. The idea behind this definition is that reflexivity establishes the border between a living being and the environment and other living beings. In this sense, reflexivity is the most fundamental characteristic of life on Earth because it prevents systemic organizations and complexes of living beings from entropy or disintegration in the world, which is called by some scientists as "negative entropy". Then the process of reflexivity brings in order, based on convention, in our life, provides us with the organic unity and integrity of our personality.

According to Sharov, "reflexivity, on the ontological plane, is actually the process of establishing the limits, organizing intentional psychic activity and thus the human psyche as a whole" [7, 76–77]. It actually means that reflexivity underlies human consciousness and personality. Reflexivity enables us to understand our relations with the world and perceive our own personality via self-control and observation. Reflexivity regulates our relations with the outer world and organizes our thought process in a coherent and systemic whole. It seldom adheres to the conscious mind and serves as a background to it. At the same time it plays an active role in the organization of our thought processes and cognition. Without reflexivity any living being is in danger of disintegration and destruction. In view of this fact, one understands why reflexivity is so important for Iris Murdoch in her novel *The Sandcastle* if we look at the general context of the work. The twentieth century was the time of breaking rules and changing the borders, challenging our conception of what is good or bad, destroying the old stereotypes and denying traditional values, reducing human activity to repetition and igniting the rage of the most terrible war. Disintegration of mentality, loss of values and lack of spirit were and perhaps are characteristic of the time. As a result, Murdoch's reflexivity in the novel seems to be an attempt to understand the reasons of such calamities, to prevent the moral decay of human beings and warn us against blind repetition and mimicking the false paragons and modish but hollow exemplars. William Mor, the main

personage of the novel, is a person who is thrust in the world of wrong conventions and artificial borders but in the end he understands that only these limitations of his freedom are the backbone of his personality and identity as a human being able to reflect the reality.

Sharov claims that reflexivity is most noticeable in the human interaction [7, 81] and we absolutely agree with him because here reflexivity can be manifested not only in unconscious actions but in conscious use of metalanguage. In *The Sandcastle* linguistic reflexivity is one of the major means of characterization and revealing the problems by the author.

Reflexivity is not the same as reflection because reflection is already a species specific feature of all human beings and it is the basis of language and any other sign system. Together with reflexivity reflection underlies any metalingual activity of the personages in the novel of Iris Murdoch *The Sandcastle*.

Reflection, which has a lot to do with metalanguage and linguistic reflexivity, can be defined the following way: "a type of philosophical thinking which is focused on conceiving and setting its own preconditions and demands directing consciousness onto itself… Reflection is the process of mirroring the subjects on by another and themselves in the sphere of communication and social interaction…" [3, 828]. Reflection is manifested not only in control and commenting one's own speech but also in reflexive perception of the speech of another interlocutor, cognizing the peculiarities of communication in general, which may be explicated with the help of author's remarks, and soliloquy.

The main character of the novel *The Sandcastle* is always trying to understand the circumstances in which particular utterances or words are produced and realizes via metalanguage not only the attitude towards the speaker but also to oneself and the world, being represented and changed. Biryukov speaks about reflection as the basis of human consciousness: "The mystery of consciousness is the mystery of reflection, the wonderful ability to look unto oneself from outside, as if "self" were "not-self." But to do it one has to find oneself outside, to find something that is both "self" and "not-self." Another person meets this dialectically controversial condition… And only *our* communal actions, mediated by the object different from both me and another person, provide the necessary conditions for reflection and self-consciousness…" [1, 106]. The communal action which provides the conditions for characters' reflection is communication, and its means is language, "consciousness as the highest conceptual stage of thinking is formed only on the grounds of language" [2, 32–33].

Reflection has long been studied by materialists and is quintessential for understanding what metalanguage is. Reflection is our ability to present reality via signs and substitute the concrete objects with their images which help us to see the world and reflect it, which is the true goal of any human activity. Our aim is to reveal the natural potentialities for human development and reflection provides us with such an opportunity.

Consequently, reflection is the essence of creation and it necessarily follows human action because what we do should be cognized and utilized as something different from us. Our everyday life actions are meaningful only if we realize why we perform them and analyze the results to improve both the reality and self. In this paradigm, it seems absolutely natural that reflection is the basis of human consciousness, which is defined as "the highest level of psychic reflection of reality that was developed in human beings as social species as a result of acquiring language and cooperative actions with other people" [6, 316].

Acquiring language skills is here placed at the same rate of importance as cooperative actions and we wholeheartedly support this contention because language was also a tool for

cooperative action and understanding other as self and self as other. Language is not just a system of symbols but important material and simultaneously tool to shape and create social reality. Metalanguage in this regard is already a more complex system that reflects the work of our mind and connects reflexivity and reflection, language and cognition, reality and signs. It is the result of our reflection of language which directs our consciousness onto itself, becomes the means for understanding and enhancing the efficiency of language, and is aimed at preventing all kinds of miscommunication.

Metalanguage is quintessential for impartial analysis of our speech and interaction. It is defined as "a language used to refer to statements made in another language, called in this context the object language. The ideas behind the concept of a metalanguage are traceable to an article On Denoting by the Welsh philosopher B. Russell in the journal Mind in 1905, and the concept was fully developed by the Polish logician and mathematician Alfred Tarski" [9]. B. Russell and A. Tarski are representatives of positivism and their search for truth in utterances may seem superficial in contemporary linguistics but they did have an acute insight in semiotics and the fact that metalanguage is a tool of human cognition to analyze signs and verify their relation to reality.

B. Russell meticulously analyzed the concepts of meaning and denotation which are in his view aspects of metalanguage and language respectively: "When we wish to speak about the meaning of a denoting complex, as opposed to its denotation, the natural mode of doing so is by inverted commas" [11]. B. Russell rightly points out that the study of language necessarily views it as an object and scientific research necessarily becomes metalinguistic in nature: "This leads us to say, when we distinguish meaning and denotation, we must be dealing with meaning: the meaning has denotation and is a complex, and there is not something other than the meaning, which can be called the complex, and be said to have both meaning and denotation" [11]. In our view, B. Russell did distinguish metalanguage and object-language but he did not see that the first-order language is also reflection of the reality and has a meaning. We do not share the understanding of meaning by positivists but appreciate their achievement in distinguishing metalanguage and the object-language.

A. Tarski, who first introduced the term "metalanguage", posited a controversial assumption that one semiotic system can be analyzed only through another system of signs: "we have to use two different languages in discussing the problem of the definition of truth and, more generally, any problems in the field of semantics. The first of these languages is the language which is "talked about" and which is the subject matter of the whole discussion; the definition of truth which we are seeking applies to the sentences of this language. The second is the language in which we "talk about" the first language, and in terms of which we wish, in particular, to construct the definition of truth for the first language. We shall refer to the first language as "*the object language*," and to the second as "*the meta-language*." It should be noticed that these terms "object-language" and "meta- language" have only a relative sense. If, for instance, we become interested in the notion of truth applying to sentences, not of our original object-language, but of its meta-language, the latter becomes automatically the object-language of our discussion; and in order to define truth for this language, we have to go to a new meta-language so to speak, to a meta-language of a higher level. In this way we arrive at a whole hierarchy of languages" [12].

Linguists who study the relations of signs to reality and cognition have to operate the same language and that is why human language has a distinct metalingual function, first mentioned by R. Jakobson: "metalingual operations prove to be an integral part of our verbal activities" [10]. It has its own inventory but it is constantly immersed into the object

language, becomes interwoven with it and inherent to communication. Metalanguage is the result of conceptual thinking which enables people to think about thoughts, ideas and plans, verifying and analyzing them, making conclusions and controlling what they think and say.

Metalanguage is one of the distinctive features of human beings because it is the tool for reflexivity and reflection which enable us to relate to reality and defend our entity from disintegration: "In the classical German philosophy reflection, being by its nature dialectal as identity and distinction of form and content, is interpreted as process and motion (G. Hegel)" [7, 72]. In view of this fact, signs are not just objects representing other objects but rather the units of motion and power that serve us to change material world and not only to represent it: "The pivotal mechanism of reflection is the juxtaposition of two judgments – of the situation and one's own state, and of the opportunities of action in this situation" [7, 73]. Signs are not only reaction to the world but the very action to change it and metalanguage helps us refer us to reality and people and vice versa. Reflection allows us to refer to ourselves as members of society and to view ourselves through the eyes of others.

Linguistic reflexivity is an exceptionally human capability: "Linguistic reflexivity is conception and interpretation of one's own linguistic behavior and linguistic life of the society and also of the language structure and its separate facts; it creates a specific attitude to language which envisages conscious language-use, linguistic observations, relation of one's judgments to those of other people, norms and usage" [8, 809]. Moreover, linguistic reflexivity is inextricably linked to reflection and cognizing of one's own concepts, images and feelings. Linguistic reflexivity is manifested in metalanguage of the characters and the author not only when they are trying to understand the real state of affairs but also when they are trying to fathom the effects of their speech: "metalanguage is the result of reflection and control of linguistic consciousness over its work" [4, 243].

R. Barthes was one of the most famous linguists who studied the role of metalanguage in the post-modern literature [5, 627]. He stated that metalanguage was considered by post-modernists as an adequate tool for analyzing literature. In classical tradition literature and language are considered to be separate entities but even in the modern studies of language personality and discourse analysis we can see that literature is often treated as the source of material for analyzing linguistic patterns, which in our opinion is equitable and our study also relies on this propositions. However, the problem of post-modern literature is that it uses metalanguage to analyze itself and even to constitute new texts based on metalingual utterances that concern the work. Barthes says in this regard that classical literature "has never before thought about itself, did not distinguish the observer and the observed; consequently, it talked but not about itself" [5, 627]. According to R. Barthes the stages of developing metalanguage in literature are the following: 1) prehistory of metalanguage in literature: professional consciousness and efforts to make the work linguistically perfect without speaking about it; 2) pre-postmodernism: efforts to unite literature and thoughts about literature; 3) constant procrastination to write a literary work very soon but focus on metalanguage about literature; 4) loss of reference of signs, no sign was treated as relating to concrete reality; 5) pure metalinguistic activity that destroys literature as the object-language. R. Barthes concluded that "the essence of our literature is a masque that is pointing the finger at itself" [5, 628]. Metalanguage becomes the main aim of post-modern literature and all post-modern works are deliberations about language and not people and their relations to the world. Metalanguage in these works becomes the object-language of our linguistic reflexivity and so one metalanguage is used to analyze another one.

Post-modern literature turned to be too obsessed with self-analysis and reflexivity with

the stress upon destroying the old relations of literature to reality because reflexivity should be used not to create artificial limits and neglect the reality but reveal the real potentialities of human beings and understand the reality. Post-modern literature missed the point that reality is inescapable and language without the material reality and human beings is dead. In contrast Iris Murdoch uses metalanguage in *The Sandcatle* not to talk about her own work in a self-conceited manner but to reveal the inner world of the characters and let the reader understand and perceive the reality behind the utterances of the personages.

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