

Whole Mind Concept as a Methodological Basis for the Research of Autobiographical Discourse

Abstract: Definition of the narrative basis of autobiographical discourse has become an important desideratum of research for various national philology. The whole mind concept, worked out by Alan Palmer forms a considerably important methodological frame for planning the relevant research. Based on an analysis of a specific text, the present article deals with the formation of autobiographical discourse for which the integration of mental activities and continuity have a very important importance.

Keywords: Whole mind, autobiographical discourse, narrative identity.

Theoretical part

1.1. Basic Aspects of the Study

Specification of narrative basics of the autobiographical discourse started even on a structural level. In this regard, the integration of the first-person narrator into the diegesis was the step taken forward. Stanzel granted double functions to the first person narrator: First person narrator at the same time is a narrator and a character (Stanzel 2001). The above-mentioned observation is especially important for an autobiographic discourse because during narration in the texts, belonging to this very genre (factual and fictitious) an organizational function of the work structure is assigned to an alternation of the perspectives of a narrator and experienter autobiographers.

The process seen by Stanzel (alternation of perspectives) essentially embodies the dynamics of autobiographer's mentality. For studying this aspect an experientiality concept worked out by Monika Fludernik (1996) prepared a very important theoretical base within the limits of **natural narratology**. Experientiality can be considered as a synonym for a human perception of an external reality. Perception is always subjective. In order a person to identify in what kind of situation he/she found herself/himself, to imagine what kind of worldview; emotional disposition has the person he/she met, One has to activate cognitive templates kept in mind as the result of experience in order to sort out a similar situation. In other words, experientiality means the process of reflection of an external reality in the consciousness of a character.

Despite Fludernik's concept, by discovering the **experientiality** category that creates a considerably important methodological indicator for the narrative research, still the most important among the faults of the analytical methodology is the absence of value of plot for the creation of a narrative.¹ The more individual the identity of an autobiographer is, the more attention is paid to the demonstration of a disposition of an experienter autobiographer in the text. When there are no collective norms (or weakened) of behavior in the society, the narrator autobiographer tries to underpin his/her individual

¹Fludernik's experientiality value for the autobiographical discourse and generally, see a detailed analysis of the narrative basis for autobiographical discourse at Löschnigg (2006), the research of autobiographical genre has a long history (for details see Holdenried 2000), but narrative basis are never envisaged. Loshgin first studied narrative discourse of autobiography in his fundamental work, but without envisaging Palmer's concept. At the same time, Löschnigg's work is considered to be the only fundamental one. The study of the issue is the desideratum of national philologies. One of the aims of the present article is to represent the practical value of Palmer's concept for studying an autobiographical genre on the bases of analyses of a specific text.

experience for the behavior of the experiencer autobiographer. Accordingly, to study the specification of the development of this genre it is important to observe the process of formation of autobiographer's identity (disposition). For this purpose when working out the methodological basis on one side it is important to broaden the mind range of the experiencer autobiographer and on the other hand to observe the continuing-consciousness.

1.2. Whole Mind Concept

In order to study the character's mind, the experientiality of Fludernik was in many ways filled out in Alan Palmer's interdisciplinary research (Palmer2004)². His research is not connected with the narrative of the first person, though it is possible to generalize conclusions and adjust them to an autobiographical discourse.

To form the necessary methodology for the detailed analyses of the character's mind Palmer envisages the experience of the neighboring disciplines. The achievement of cognitive sciences and philosophy enabled him to direct his attention towards the aspects which were unforeseen hitherto.

To study the mind of a character for Fludernik, as for the majority of the narrators, meant the observation on the character's thoughts embodiment. Palmer thinks that the mind of a character is further multilayered and for its thorough studying it is necessary to envisage the emotions, desires, plans, disposition of a character. Accordingly, he uses the term **mental integrity**. As a rule, in narrative texts the information about this kind of mind activities is given in the form of a report. Palmer thinks that this strategy of a person's activity embodiment has been unfairly neglected by the narrators.³ Report belongs to a narrator, accordingly underlining the importance of the present strategy at the same time means the rehabilitation of a narrator's function. Unlike Fludernik, Palmer thinks that embodiment of a character's mind (Fludernik's experientiality) the narrator bears a decisive role (Palmer 2004: 194).

As it has already been mentioned, according to Fludernik, a narrative status never bears an immanent nature of a text; text in this dimension, only goes into the act of reception. Opposite to the mentioned position, Palmer thinks that the narrator creates the reading instructions for the character's mind activities (experientiality) (ibid. 199). These sort of instructions are important to perceive mind dynamic of a character. For Palmer, the fault of the previous narrative research is the absence of integrity of a character's separate thought into the whole text context and namely, the mind activities of the same character described within the limits of other episodes are not envisaged. Each of such episode is an embedded narrative. Their integrity creates for a reader the imagination about the duration of character's mind activities.

According to Palmer, information about the dynamic of a character's mind is often given in the narrator's report by means of which the reader gets the information about the character's emotional condition, thoughts, and goals. Though how separate reports fill each other and how they direct the characters' activity in most cases are not specified by the narrator. Thus, when reading a literary text the attention is paid to a gap and filling out of the gap is up to a reader: "The reader collects together all of the isolated references to a specific proper name in a particular text and constructs a consciousness that continues in the spaces between the various mentions of that character. The reader strategy is to join up the dots (ibid.2619)." In order to compensate the gaps in the text, Palmer thinks the reader has to activate the cognitive schemes.

²Palmer's work Kindle version is utilized in the present work and instead of pages, the location is indicated.

³The exception is Dorothy Kons' work (1978).

Practical Part

Introduction

To study the autobiographical discourse in the diachronic context it is important to find out how much individual is the identity of an autobiographer, whether it has a subjective vision (one of the main characteristics of Fludernik's experientiality). To achieve this purpose it is quite fruitful to use the categories worked out for studying the formation of a behavioral disposition of a character. Taking into consideration Palmer's landmark work when observing the mental processes of a character (experiencer autobiographer) the attention should be paid to mind process durability and variety. Besides the character's thought, the formation of an emotional experience should be envisaged too.

It should be noted that the most important part of an experiencer autobiographer's experience is his/her communication with other people. To reconstruct this experience the reader has to observe how the narrator autobiographer represents the mental activities of the surrounding people. The model of mind functionality of other people represented by the narrator autobiographer later becomes an organizing cognitive frame for the perception of an experiencer autobiographer.⁴

Mariam Jambakur-Orbeliani's autobiography is taken as a sampling text, it has a difficult structure that is why its detailed consideration in the present article cannot be implemented⁵. As an example, two interconnected episodes from the text will be analyzed. The presented analyses should show how the observation on the durability of mind of a character changes the imagination of a reader in regards to a character. The role of emotion in the mind activities should be outlined as well. To define the specifics of an autobiographical discourse it is especially important to show the formation peculiarities of an experiencer autobiographer's individual experience.

Text Analyses

An analytical episode is dedicated to autobiographer Mariam's journey to Warsaw and namely, the narrator autobiographer describes what kind of expression she had about her relative when she first saw her. In this episode, the experiencer autobiographer is not seen and only the narrator autobiographer is represented. However, this narrative, **as the part of the autobiographer's experience**, is actualized in the following episode when the perspective of an experiencer autobiographer is presented. Namely, the experiencer creates the disposition of an autobiographer, gives directions to her thoughts and perception. Due to this fact, the above episode is not analyzed in details. It, taken separately, clearly shows how a narrator, with the usage of report, can represent the complexity of mind activities of a character.

The spouses Bariatinsks were very welcoming, my cousin Lisa was crying with joy, I have not seen her since her childhood and I did not know her completely, but we got close to each other at once. She had beautiful eyes expressing her abilities, she was vivid without the slightest clumsiness. She as the rest of the members of our

⁴The narrator autobiographer does not have biographical interests in autobiographical discourse. Telling about other people depends on the narrative autobiographical frame. Frame narration, as the strategy creating multiperspectivity, is considered in Wolf's work (2000), for the definition of the problems of the first person narrator's perspective see Edmiston (1989).

⁵Mariam Jambakur-Orbeliani (1852-1942) was the granddaughter of the Georgian King Erekle the II she was educated at home, she had European teachers, she was taught the world history and literature, she took music lessons too. It should be noted that Mariam knew French, Italian, German and Russian languages. She wrote the 80% of an analytical autobiographical text in French which later was translated in Georgian by Tedo Sakhokia. Mariam was an active public figure, she took care of women rights, and she was actively involved in the foundation of the first Georgian University. The launching of the first women Georgian school is connected with her name too.

*family was especially **fond of** my brother Nicolaus and **wanted** to know his life **in details**. He asked me how I and her relatives were doing. Those ones she had left in Georgia and had no hope she would **ever see** them again. When she was speaking her voice **depicted sorrow** for the past which was **impossible to get back**. **She was not happy** with her womanizer husband, he pretended to be devoted to his wife but even in his old age he was the same as before, he could not say no to beautiful women. I felt Lisa was unhappy, she was very **indifferent** to the luxury around her and I began to **love her even more**.(Jambakuri-Orbeliani 2009: 92)*

In the verified passage, behavioral disposition creates the character's mental activity that does not have a verbalized form in the character's consciousness. We get the information about it from the narrator who uses a protocol. Using this strategy Mariam tries to present the deeper inner processes which were the basis of Lisa's emotions when meeting Mariam - "My cousin Lisa **was crying with joy**".

In regards to the analytical phrase, it should be asked whom the word **with joy** belongs to. If we assign it to a narrator then the summary of the passage should be understood in the following way: the narrator is more active than Lisa is, Lisa used to lead a passive way of life and systematic reflection of her own life was unfamiliar to her. She was in hard condition though the reason, which provoked her hard condition, was unfamiliar to her. Mariam, who had a great life experience, visiting her cousin Liza manages to find an explanation of Liza's condition. The narrator thinks that though Lisa was crying during her meeting with Mariam, the basis of such behavior was her great joy instead of sorrow; in this case, the narration would be diverted towards actual reality.

Reading this way would not suit the whole summary of the passage- the narrator devotes a great time to presenting Liza's disposition- "**She wanted to know in details**" "...**vivid eyes**" according to author's report Liza is shown as an active, full of life person. In order to take into consideration the readable context, the comment presented by the narrator at the end of the episode is of great importance as well- "**And I began to love her even more**" the whole previous narration shows dynamic of Liza's inner world and her very vitality which is described with the narrator's unity of reports had become the base for Mariam's attitude towards her - she starts to love Liza. Thus, in the analytical phrase it is illogical to see Liza as a passive person.

If we exclude that Liza is passive, the word "*with joy*" must belong to her. Accordingly, with this lexical unit the marking of a free, indirect thought will take place in the sentence. This word represents the thought in a compressed form, if extended it will get the following form: "I am so glad I am able to get back to my past but unfortunately it is only temporal."

Mariam Jambakur-Orbeliani's whole text shows that emotions are very important for autobiography; it is the part of her personal identity. However, emotional behavior does not mean infantilism for her. As a rule, showing of the emotional behavior in the text is accompanied with one's own or others embodied disposition. In the analytical phrase, Liza's thoughts can be guessed by means of the following sentences where her previous experience is shown. Right here it should be proved that the basis of the behavior of one's own or others is not presented by the author's evaluating comments. The reader unites the separate reports by activating the scheme of mind dynamic and duration.

One of the bases of Liza's emotional reaction when meeting Mariam was that "**She was not Happy**" her inner condition was not only provoked by one circumstance (only by her husband's behavior). Her husband's attitude and in general, her own life seemed unacceptable for Liza comparing with the experience she had accumulated before she got married. The qualitative difference of old experience is indicated by the author's report in the analytical episode. Liza was indifferent to a material welfare deprived of love. The contrast against such mood is created by Liza's particular desire (**wanted to know in details, she loved**) to know something about her relatives.

The mind processes that were the basis for Liza's happy tears are even more ramified in the analytical passage, the narrator notes that Liza's **voice depicted sorrow** for her own past, which was impossible to get back and **she had lost hope for ever**. At one glance, the author's report indicates Liza's desperate

condition but its meaning changes when comparing it with Liza's other mental processes: **She had beautiful eyes expressing her abilities, she was vivid without the slightest clumsiness.** The author's report reflects the dynamic that had been accompanying Liza's mind activities for years. The narrator pays attention to the fact that Liza could withstand life (orientation on the material welfare) ("**without the slightest clumsiness**") and the main proof of these words were her **vivid** eyes. Liza was not following her life processes passively, she was not allowing them to destroy her inner world. The fact that besides being vivid **her eyes were expressing her abilities too.**

Her active nature reflected in her eyes acquires a positive connotation in regards to her other mind activities (**She was not happy, had no hope**). When comparing her conditions it can be concluded that she defended herself from life not only with indifference, mechanically, but her vivid eyes were the proof that it was the result of her well thought out inner struggle.

The narrator's report conveys ("wanted to know everything in **details**") that Liza wanted to get information about her relatives very much. To read the passage correctly a question should be asked: was Liza's interest for the past that forever was left in the past reveal of despair or the reflection of the mode of her mind activities? Though Liza had no hope she would get back her past life, it seems her pre-marriage experience (at first, emotional) served as the basis for her identity. Thus, the reader might suppose that this very experience was her strength giving her power to maintain viability in her unbearable life.

After the analyses of Liza's disposition, it clearly shows how complex mind processes are reflected in the words "Liza **was crying with joy**". On one side it shows Liza's tragic life and on the hand –her personal strength.

The episodes depicting the author's coming back to the homeland accompany the visit to Warsaw in Mariam Jambakur-Orbeliani's text. It shows what mind processes her homeland originated in the inner world of the experienter autobiographer.

*Soon we embarked on a road, to tell the truth, I was bored with **roaming**... those who don't know how it feels when you are away from the homeland will never be able to understand the terrible torture of those miserable creatures, who have lost hope to ever see their homeland again, the **hearth of their country**... on the way to the Caucasus a **hope was born in me, very soon my being without my country would end. It gave me strength, brought the previous color back to my face** and after some days my eyes were filled with tears of happiness when I saw our mountains. I already felt myself at home in Kazbegi. However, my **Delight diminished** when we came to Pasaauri ravine, **very rich part of my county but full of sorrowful historical events.**(Jambakur-Orbeliani 2009: 93)*

The perspective of the experienter autobiographer dominates in the given text and several details indicate it, the lexical unit **roaming** (having connotation meaning) conveys senseless, unnecessary activity. While still with Liza Mariam's feeling about her homeland's values were growing. Accordingly, the word **roaming** is not the evaluation made by the narrator autobiographer after years; the word bearing emotional connotation meaning depicts a verbalized thought in an experienter autobiographer's consciousness. It marks a free indirect thought, the previous experience; impressions gotten during her visit to Liza gave a way to such thought. Analyses of the previous episode revealed that for Mariam was important to show the depth of Liza's inner world. It is clear that this meaning within the limits of the discourse of autobiography should be attached to the formation of the autobiographer's identity. That it is why the narrative depicting her visit to Liza is subordinated to the autobiographical narrative.

The subordination is twice, explicitly indicated in the text. In the beginning of the episode, Mariam notes that she did not know Liza, but she got closer to her very soon. It can be said that by showing Liza's inner world she intended to show the reason of getting so close to her, it is proved even with the replication of a narrator autobiographer in the end of the passage - "**And I began to love her even more**", the summery of this phrase can be extended in the following way: I began to love Liza for her qualities.

The words bearing emotional connotation meaning in the text **Homeland hearth** belong to an experiencer autobiographer. The hearth is the place where the human feels very calm; accordingly, it would be incorrect to connect this word to a narrator autobiographer, who evaluates the issues after a long time. As it seems Mariam's whole mind was occupied with the gotten experience when she visited Liza (Liza's lack of tranquility).

The analytical passage says that the eyes of the autobiographer were filled with **tears of happiness** when she was returning to her homeland. When analyzing this phrase a question should be asked: To whom the word tear of happiness belongs? To the narrator or experiencer autobiographer? If the narrator is evaluating her past life, the narration will deviate towards actual reality. In this case, joy does not appear to be the emotion caused by the context, it is perceived as part of nature/ character of an autobiographer. Thus, the reader should accept the autobiographer's emotion as **logical and inevitable. In any case**, seeing her homeland again would cause prevailed happiness in her.

In case if analytical words belong to an experiencer autobiographer, they will be classified as free indirect thoughts and what is more important, they will be consisting of more meaning and reflect the previous episodes, it indicates to a high quality of narration experimentation as it conveys the importance to show the dynamic of consciousness formation by the autobiographer. In this case, **tears of happiness** convey thoughts and emotions in a compressed way, originated in the inner world of an experiencer autobiographer. If these words are extended the thoughts of an autobiographer will be formed in the following way: though my being far away from my homeland was unbearable and painful (poor Liza, how will she be) but fortunately I am still in my homeland.

An additional attention should be paid to one detail of perception of an experiencer autobiographer, she presents it in the end of the passage: "But my **Delight diminished** when we came to Pasanauri ravine, **very rich part of my county but full of sorrowful historical events.**" The analytical phrase reflects the previous episode. Homeland for an experiencer autobiographer is not only the place where her relatives live but also it is connected with superhuman values that were absent in Liza's everyday life.

Conclusion

The purpose of the research was to determine the relevancy of the **whole mind** concept in order to study autobiographical discourse in diachronic context. To achieve the above purpose several sub-purposes were defined.

- a. According to an analytical concept, the narrator is an institution forming mental integrity and continuity of characters. Accordingly, in reference to autobiographical discourse, its role in the embodiment of narrative identity should be clarified.
- b. The mind processes of the character in the text despite her thoughts cover her emotions and desires too. At the same time, the mental processes are characterized by continuity; character's each previous experience creates a disposition for every following action. Envisaging the above methodological basis, the main subject of interest during research was the determination of the peculiarities of an autobiographer's mental activities.

The analyses of the two sampling episodes taken from Mariam Jambakur-Orbeliani's autobiographical text revealed:

- a) Autobiographical discourse embodies autobiographer's interactions with the outer reality and basically with society. That is why the narrator often creates the portraits of surrounding people. In this case, unlike the third person's narration, the narrator does not need to

introduce a new character in the fictional world and integrate it into diegesis. The narration of a narrator embodies the experience of an experiencer autobiographer.

When reading an autobiographical text in order to interpret perception of an experiencer autobiographer the reader needs to envisage the autobiographer's previous experience. The very experience is the description of other people by an autobiographer. If the subject of stylistics is the observation of qualitiveness of the third person's narration, its study in the autobiographical discourse at the same time is the means of interpretation of autobiographer's disposition. Alan Palmer's point of view should be envisaged in order to properly study the experience of an experiencer autobiographer reflected in the narration of a narrator autobiographer: The information about the characters' mentality is given in the narrator's report and the reader needs to activate its cognitive scheme of continuing-consciousness in order to unite the mentality of all characters.

- b) The correct interpretation of separate thoughts, emotions of an experiencer autobiographer that are given in the text is impossible if the reader does not envisage the autobiographer's previous experience. Such experience in the text is not marked out with metanarrative comments. The reader has to activate the cognitive scheme in order to adapt the previous narrative of a narrator with the analytical action of an experiencer autobiographer. It was also defined that overall, an emotional experience creates the experiencer biographer's disposition.

References:

Text

Jambakur-Orbeliani 2009: Jambakur-Orbeliani, Mariam. *Memories*. In public figures of Georgia in the 19th century. Tbilisi: Georgian Biographical Center, 2009.

Criticism

Cohn 1978: Cohn, Dorrit. *Transparent Minds. Narrative Modes for Presenting Consciousness in Fiction*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978.

Edmiston 1989: Edmiston, William. Focalization and the First-Person Narrator: A Revision of the Theory. *Poetics Today* 10,4: 729-744, 1989.

Fludernik 1996: Fludernik, Monika. *Towards a 'Natural' Narratology*. London, New York: Routledge, 1996

Holdenried 2000: Holdenried, Michaela. *Autobiographie*. Stuttgart: Reclam, 2000.

Löschnigg 2006: Löschnigg, Martin. *Die englische fiktionale Autobiographie. Erzähltheoretische Grundlagen und historische Prägnanzformen von den Anfängen bis zu Mitte des neunzehnten Jahrhundert*. Trier: wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier, 2006.

Palmer 2004: Palmer, Alan. *Fictional Minds*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2004.

Wolf 2000: Wolf, Werner. *Multiperspektivität: Das Konzept und seine Applikationsmöglichkeit auf Rahmungen in Erzählwerken*. In *Multiperspektivisches Erzählen. Zur Theorie und Geschichte der Perspektivenstruktur im englischen Roman des 18. Bis 20. Jahrhunderts*, ed. Vera und Ansgar Nünning, 79-111. Trier: wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier, 2000.