POLITENESS STRATEGY AND GENDER STEREOTYPES IN PERSONAGES' SPEECH OF MODERN BRITISH DRAMA

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Modern linguistic research aims at studying language phenomena in their connection with the speaker using them. As a result communicant's gender is taken into account. Our investigation based on gender stereotypes which are reflected in the personages' discourse of Modern British Drama is topical as it combines discourse and communicative approaches to the analysis of gender differentiation of speech and aims at showing the correspondence between the personages' remarks and those gender stereotypes which exist in the British cultural community. The assumption that the communicant's speech depends on gender stereotypes existing in a definite community and regulating its members' behaviour lays the foundation of the research.

Stereotypes are culturally and nationally specific as they characterize a person in a definite community. Communicative gender stereotypes do not necessarily reflect the speech skills and there may be some difference between stereotypes and real speech practice which is proved by numerous investigations [Stokoe, 1998]. At the same time communicative gender stereotypes influence the choice of strategies and tactics in specific situations of communication.

Politeness as a communicative strategy is used in the process of interaction in order to reach various pragmatic purposes. According to gender stereotypes which exist in the English-language community politeness is more typical of women's speech [Lakoff, 1973]. The violation of politeness strategies leads to the domination of the first communicant if the second communicant is satisfied with the dependent position or to the confrontation if the second partner is not satisfied with it.

The analysis of personages' speech shows that politeness strategies include tactics of promise used by women-personages:

Lilian. *I love you. (Pause) I won't let you down.*

Larry. *What are you talking about?*

Lilian. *Whatever happens. I won't let you down* [Hoddinot 1979, 4], whereas men-personages demonstrate the absence of desire to make promises:

Guy. *All right. If you want to talk about it, we will* [Ayckbourn 1986, 85].

Male personages use direct commands which violate the politeness principle [Brown, Levingson, 1978] while communicating with women in order to influence their behavior or decisions:

Graham. *Ring her and say I've got rabies* [Rayburn 1977, 8], and ignore or criticize women's direct and indirect commands:

Tessa. *Oh, leave her alone.*

Graham. *She never leaves me alone, does she? She radiates disapproval of everything I say and do* [Rayburn, 1977, 9].

Empathy as a tactics of politeness implies compassion and sympathy. For instance, having learned about the partner's daughter's death the woman-personage shows her sympathy:

Frank (quietly). *She – died, I'm afraid.* Paula is genuinely sorry

Paula. *Oh, dear. I am sorry. I-I didn't know* [Benfield 1981, 9].

Thus, the analysis shows that women-personages use the strategy of politeness in order to take into account the interests of both communicants, whereas men-personages pursue their own interests only and ignore politeness strategies. These facts correspond to the existing in the English-language community stereotype. The further perspective of the research is connected with the analysis of gender stereotypes reflection in the same-sex personages' speech.

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