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**Some Preliminaries for the Study of Covert Categories
with Special Reference to Gender**

Based on the contrastive study of typologically very distinct languages (viz. Standard Average European vs. Amerindian), B. L. Whorf distinguished between overt and covert categories, referring to them as **pheno-** and **cryptotypes**, respectively. Phenotypes are *classical* morphological categories with explicit grammatical meaning and formal indication, that is a morpheme, while cryptotypes are covert categories, being based upon the semantic and syntactic features of words with no explicit morphological expression, but essentially instrumental for the construction and understanding of utterances; they influence the collocation of a given word with other words in a sentence. The present paper focuses on the study of the latter, i.e. that of covert categories (cryptotypes). As a rule, two kinds of cryptotypes have been identified: *classifying* and *modifying*. A covert category is a classifying one whenever its meaning is permanent for a given language item. If the meaning of an item is variable, then this is a domain of a modifying covert category.

Gender can be regarded to be one of such categories in languages like Georgian, English, Turkish, etc., and, hence, it may be referred to as *covert gender*. This approach assumes that a referent of a generic animate noun, denoting human species, and semantic markers may be regularly associated with only (or mainly) either a male or a female person.

In order to identify the overt contours of this covert category, the database should include the lexical units with no indications to a possible gender of their referents in their nominations (for instance, words like English *chairman/chairwoman* or Georgian *jar-is-k'ac-i* /army-GEN-man-NOM/ 'soldier', *med-da* /med[icine]-sister/ 'nurse' should be excluded; also words with overt semantic indications to a

referent's natural gender: Georgian *deda*/English *mother*, etc.). More specifically, terms for person reference should be targeted (lacking any formal linguistic clues to the gender of the person referred). As for Georgian, there is a following division of nouns into **Vin** ('who') nouns, denoting only humans, and **Ra** ('what'), denoting all the rest. Therefore, only the **Vin** nouns should be concerned.

At the first stage, the definitions of the collected units occurring in various dictionaries should be analyzed (compilers of dictionaries have also been speakers of those languages, and they could have assigned a certain word to a certain gender). The next stage may involve the study of corpora in terms of the identification of covert gender patterns. Concurrently, a pilot study should be conducted including the appropriate analyses of subjects' responses.

Based on the results of the preliminary investigations of a case in point, it can be stated that covert gender in genderless languages has both semantic and syntactic, and pragmatic and cognitive dimensions. With respect to cognitive dimensions, a special emphasis should be laid upon peculiar traits of Gender Belief System (GBS) in a particular language community as far as it can affect the grammatical systems of not only genderless languages, but also those of the ones with overt grammatical gender marking (for instance, Russian *maβinist//maβinistka*, Swedish *kassorska//kassor*, etc.).