

UDC 81'42

## LEXICAL REPRESENTATION OF “EGO BOOSTING / EGO EFFACING” AS ONE OF THE VALUE CONNOTATIONS OF “MASCULINITY / FEMININITY” CULTURAL DIMENSION (BASED ON THE MATERIAL OF ENGLISH AND RUSSIAN)

U.S. Zakharova

Tomsk State University (Tomsk, Russian Federation)  
E-mail: ulyana.zakharova@gmail.com

**Abstract.** The article is devoted to the lexical representation analysis of one of the social value connotations of “masculinity / femininity” cultural dimension – “ego boosting / ego effacing” in Russian and in English. The analysis contains several aspects: the number of elements in the synonymic row of key words, representing these connotations, specificity of denotative and evaluative aspects of semantics, frequency of these key words in speech actualization. The theoretical bases of the research are G. Hofstede’s anthropological theory and A. Wierzbicka’s linguacultural theory.

**Keywords:** cultural dimension; keywords; cultural elaboration; masculinity / femininity; ego effacing; ego boosting.

Cultural specificity lexical representation study is found in the centre of many modern language and culture studies based on various methods and approaches. Current study is attempting to analyze lexical representation of the social value orientation of “masculinity / femininity” cultural dimension formulated by his author G. Hofstede as “ego boosting / ego effacing”. The analysis is based on the G. Hofstede’s anthropological cultural dimensions theory and A. Wierzbicka’s linguacultural key words theory (argumentation of these two theories interrelationship is given in [1]).

The key term of G. Hofstede’s cross-cultural research is *cultural dimensions* – “the values that distinguished countries (rather than individuals) from each other” [2: 11]. He defined six such dimensions including “masculinity / femininity” opposing values that are traditionally thought of as masculine to those ones which are thought of as feminine [3]. Following anthropological research traditions, hidden culture value orientations were formulated by G. Hofstede on the bases of the peculiar social behavior analysis revealed by various cultures representatives. Our hypothesis is that the results of these values lexical representation analysis should correlate with those of the behavior peculiarities analysis held by G. Hofstede.

G. Hofstede formulated his “masculinity / femininity” dimension on the bases of 70 hidden value orientations [2: 298, 299, 306, 312]. The present article demonstrates the ways of lexical representation of one value orientation “ego boosting / ego effacing” in comparison of two linguacultures – Russian and English. At this stage we investigate lexical representation aspect that allows us to bring into correlation G. Hofstede’s research results

with the results of A. Wierzbicka's concept cultural elaboration study results. This scholar's interests are in specific national concepts revelation based on the analysis of their linguistic means of representation, lexical, derivative and syntactical ones. One of the central terms in A. Wierzbicka's works are *key words* – “the words which are particularly important and revealing in a given culture” [4: 15, 16].

We suggest that her methodology with some additional stages can be used for revealing lexical representation of masculine and feminine values formulated by G. Hofstede.

Further some variants of one value lexical representation, “ego boosting / ego effacing”, are to be considered [2: 299, 306].

Understanding (perceiving) one's own role in a particular action is closely connected with another “masculinity / femininity value” – “ego-/relationship orientation” [5] – and non-agentivity (the feeling that human beings are not in control of their lives and that their control over events is limited [6: 395]) analyzed by A. Wierzbicka. She claims that Russian culture is non-agentive and English is agentive. This feature is represented in the language syntax and these differences between Russian and English in this case in our view can serve as one of the language evidence that Russian culture representatives are closer to ego-effacing and English ones – to ego-boosting.

A. Wierzbicka made a conclusion about this issue on the bases of nominative- and dative-like constructions dominating in the language. This article deals with key values representation on the bases of lexical semantics. As the examples of notions representing “ego boosting / ego effacing” value the following lexical units are analyzed: *cooperation / collaboration* (*сотрудничество*), *solidarity* (*солидарность*), *modesty* (*скромность*) representing feminine values, and *persistence / perseverance* (*настойчивость*) representing masculine ones.

To analyze the peculiarities of these words functioning in the languages we hold a multiaspect analysis: 1) number of synonyms of these words, 2) peculiar features of the denotative and 3) evaluative aspects of these elements in semantics and stylistic marking, 4) frequency of the key words in speech.

Resources used for the research are the following dictionaries: Russian defining dictionary [7], Russian and English synonyms dictionaries [8], [9-12], English thesaurus [13], frequency dictionaries [14, 15] and online dictionaries [16, 17].

We will consider all of the suggested words representing the value orientation in Russian and English one by one.

#### I. *Cooperation / collaboration.*

In English there are two and in Russian only one word that realizes this meaning.

1. *The number of elements in the key word synonymic row shows that in English this notion is more elaborated.*

In Russian *сотрудничество* enters 13 synonyms row with a dominant word *помощь* (*help*) [10: 445]. In English there are 36 synonyms of *cooperation* [13: 174] and 20 of *collaboration* [Ibid: 144].

2. *Semantic peculiarities of the word and its synonyms.*

In Russian *сотрудничество* has two meanings: “1. Help, participation in some kind of action, business. 2. Joined actions” [7. V. 14: 408].

Meaning of English *cooperation* is an act or a process of joined work to achieve one result [16], *collaboration* is “1. an act of work with somebody to produce something, 2. treacherous cooperation with an enemy” [16].

We suggest that the main difference in semantics of the lexemes *сотрудничество*, *cooperation* and *collaboration* is in the distribution of participants’ roles. Russian seme *help* implies unequal distribution of responsibilities. In the English words the seme *partnership* is the most significant – participants’ duties and a reward for the results are distributed equally.

Though the seme *help* exists in the semantics of the synonymic row elements of English *cooperation* and *collaboration*, as well. There are two subgroups in the synonymic row of *cooperate*. The first one has *partnership* as a common seme: *collaborate* (28 synonyms), the second – the seme *be of assistance: help* (23 synonyms) [13: 173]. The same correlation can be observed in the *collaborate* synonymic row: 1. *cooperate* (21 synonyms), 2. *fraternize* (7 synonyms) [Ibid: 144].

*Cooperation* synonymic row includes 14 polysemic elements representing both types of the values – feminine and masculine ones. These words imply voluntary joined actions based on trust, mutual aid, goodwill, collaboration and concurrence, strength domination and importance of wealth (for example, *coactions, help, concurrence*).

*Сотрудничество* enters a synonymic row built of the following elements: *помощь, вспоможение, вспомоществование, поддержка, подмога, подспорье, пособие, воспомощение, пособничество, содействие, польза, субсидия* [10: 445]. The word *помощь* (*help*) is the dominant element of the row and the common seme for all of the words mentioned above.

3. *Evaluative aspect of these elements semantics and stylistic marking.* In the process of the third aspect analysis disapproving evaluation of the *collaboration* second meaning has been revealed – *treacherous cooperation with an enemy* [13: 174].

*Сотрудничество* has no negative evaluation but there is a word with such a feature in its synonymic row – *пособничество* (synonyms are *сообщничество* and *соучастие*) that enter the denonative-ideographic group “a person / people in their relation to crime” [11: 170].

4. Frequency analysis of the words mentioned above was held using frequency dictionaries built on the basis of national languages corpora. The

numbers are remarkable: *collaboration* – 14 ipm (items per million), *cooperation* – 12 ipm, and *сотрудничество* – 70.6 ipm. So, despite the fact that cultural elaboration of Russian word is smaller (the length of the synonymic row), it is being used more often in speech.

So, the quantitative analysis showed that the English words covered are characterized by bigger cultural elaboration of synonymic rows, the Russian word – by higher frequency of usage; the qualitative analysis showed a discrepancy between the key semes of the words covered (*partnership* – *cooperation* and *collaboration*, *help* – *сотрудничество*).

## II. *Solidarity.*

1. *The number of elements in the synonymic row of solidarity* is bigger than of *солидарность*: 12 versus 3 elements [13: 888].

### 2. *Peculiar features of the word and its synonyms semantics.*

In Russian *солидарность* has a meaning “active sympathy to somebody’s actions or opinion; common interests, unanimity” [7. V. 14: 212]. In English *solidarity* is “a unity or accord of feelings or actions, especially among people with mutual interests, mutual support within a group” [16]. That means that all of the meaning components in the words repeat except for the seme *mutual support* of the English word.

### 3. *Evaluative aspects analysis.*

*Солидарность* synonymic row includes *сочувствие, сострадание, участие* [8: 331]. *Solidarity* synonyms are *unanimity, unity, like-mindedness, agreement, accord, harmony, consensus, concord, concurrence, cooperation, cohesion, camaradie* [13: 888]. So the Russian synonymic row claims unity of feelings as the most significant issue, the English one – rational unity of opinions and unity of actions.

4. *Frequency analysis of the words in speech* showed that the Russian word appear in speech less often than the English one (*солидарность* – 8,6 ipm, *solidarity* – 11 ipm) [14, 15]. Possibly, it happens due to the fact that the last word has a rich number of semes.

As far as the analysis revealed the notion *solidarity* is more elaborated in English with the semes *unity of opinion* and *unity of actions* as the main ones, while in the *солидарность* synonymic row *unity of feelings* is more significant.

## III. *Modesty.*

1. *The number of elements in the synonymic row of the key word* shows that its cultural elaboration in Russian and English is almost equal: *скромность* has 11 synonyms [8: 919-922; 11: 88], *modesty* – 10 [13: 640].

### 2. *Peculiar features of the word and its synonyms semantics.*

*Скромность* in Russian is “a trait of a modest (*скромный*) person”, *скромный* – “one who is not in the habit of highlighting one’s own merits, boasting of one’s own merits; lacking vanity and arrogance” [7. V. 13: 1067,

1068]. *Modesty* is “a trait or a state of a person not pretending for the evaluation of his abilities” [16]. So these meanings can be viewed as similar.

Russian *скромность* has the following synonyms: *сдержанность, корректность, почтительность, скованность, чопорность, церемонность* (6 synonyms) [8: 919-922], *безыскусность, бесхитростность, непритязательность, неприхотливость, простота* (5 synonyms) [11: 88]. English *modesty* in a meaning of a trait of character has the following synonyms: *self-effacement, humility, reserve, reticence, unpretentiousness, shyness, bashfulness, timidity, self-consciousness, meekness* (10 synonyms) [13: 640].

Thus though *reticence* and *simplicity* are represented in the synonymic row of the English word, they are represented better in the synonyms of the Russian words.

### 3. Evaluative aspects analysis.

Among all of the synonyms of *скромность* and *modesty* two elements are remarkable with its disapproving evaluation – *чопорность* and *shyness*.

Disapproving evaluation characterizes a verb *скромничать* derived from a noun *скромность* and defined as “to show one’s own extra modesty, diminishing one’s rewards or merits, be silent about them” [7. V. 13: 1067]. Its English equivalent is *to be overmodest*. Synonymic row of *скромничать* proves that: *плакаться, жаловаться, бить на жалость, самоунижаться, наговаривать на себя* [8: 1032]. So, the verb and the corresponding word combination have a seme *excessiveness* that implies the norm rejection and are thought of as negative.

According to the Russian and English lexicography tradition the synonymic rows of abstract nouns and qualitative adjectives are presented via mutual reference. That is why the adjectives *скромный* and *modest* are of our interest, as well.

*Modest* represents the key notion of a feminine society but within its synonymic row there are some words representing a detachment of a group and individualism, such as *reserved, retiring, quiet, coy, cheap* (Am. Eng.) [13: 640].

4. *Frequency analysis of the words* in speech shows that the Russian word is twice more frequent than the English one: *modest* – 23 ipm, *скромный* – 49,2 ipm [14, 15].

Thus the analysis revealed that cultural elaboration of *скромность* and *modesty* are approximately equal. In the synonymic rows one and the same semes are presented though they are presented asymmetrically. In the semantics of the words examined has been revealed some sort of disapproval to the excessive modesty. The Russian word is appeared to be more frequent.

### IV. Persistence and insistence.

#### 1. The number of elements in the synonymic row of the key word.

The Russian word *настойчивость* has 4 synonyms [12: 264] while English *persistence* and *insistence* – 27 и 11 synonyms accordingly [13: 716, 473].

2. *Peculiar features of the word and its synonyms semantics.* The word *настаивать* means “intensively strive for or request to fulfill something” [7. V. 7: 526, 527], therefore *настойчивость* – “persistence in achieving something” [Ibid: 533]. The meanings of the English words are the following: “persistence is a fact of keeping one’s opinion or action despite difficulties and contraction; continued or prolonged existence of something, insistence – fact or a state of insisting on something that makes sense or must be done” [16]. Thus in the Russian word the seme *request* is more significant.

The remark given above is proved by the fact that *настаивание* is in the synonymic row with a dominant *request*. This row includes such words as *приказывать* and *запрещать* as well [8: 860].

The English word *persistence* enters a synonymic row with dominant member *perseverance* and 27 other elements: *tenacity, determination, resolve, resolution, resoluteness, staying power, purposefulness, firmness of purpose, patience, endurance, application, diligence, sedulousness, dedication, commitment, doggedness, persistency, pertinacity, assiduity, assiduousness, steadfastness, tirelessness, indefatigability, stamina, intransigence, obstinacy, (informal) stickability* [13: 716].

The noun *insistence* enters a synonymic row with a dominant member *demand* and 11 elements: *bidding, command, dictate, instruction, requirement, request, entreaty, urging, exhortation, importuning* [Ibid: 473].

Synonymic rows analysis showed that the meaning “request fulfilling something” of the Russian word is not typical for *persistence* because its peculiarity is some kind of self-directed action while *request* is directed onto another person. Its synonym *demand* exists as one of the meanings of *insist* though it is less represented.

3. *Evaluative aspects analysis* shows that all the words examined are characterized by positive or neutral evaluation.

4. *Frequency analysis of the words in speech.*

The most frequent of these words is *persist* (67 ipm), less frequent is *настаивать* (37,2 ipm (including homonyms)) and the least frequent is *insist* 18 ipm [14, 15].

Conclusion: Quantitative analysis of the notions *настойчивость / persistence / insistence* showed that the English synonymic rows are longer, at the same time *persist* is more frequent than the Russian word. These words peculiarity is their polysemy that is why these numbers characterize not only the aspect considered. Qualitative analysis of the key words only is thereupon more representative. Its results revealed that in various national cultures different semes appeared to be the most significant (*persistence* in Eng-

lish culture, *request* – in Russian one). Combining these results with A. Wierzbicka's conclusion and D. Gachev's comment on a "self-made person" as a key image in English culture [18: 158, 165], we came up with a decision that *persistence* is more representative in English linguaculture.

Thus language elaboration analysis of the notions *сотрудничество / collaboration / cooperation*, *солидарность / solidarity*, *скромность / modesty* and *настойчивость / persistence / insistence* showed that these units can be interpreted as lexical representants of the masculinity / femininity values of Russian and English linguacultures. The results prove the working assumption about possible correlations between lexical elaboration of the culturally-significant concepts language analysis results and G. Hofstede's anthropological study results.

### Literature

1. ZAKHAROVA, U.S., 2012. Analysis of specific national culture: the problem of synthesis of the theory of key words and theories of cultural dominants. *Bulletin of Tomsk State University. Cultural and Art.* 3 (7), pp. 15-18.
2. HOFSTEDE, GEERT, 2001. *Culture's consequences: Comparing values, behaviors, institutions, and organizations*. SAGE Publications Inc., 596 p.
3. Geert Hofstede and Geert Jan Hofstede's official website <http://www.geerthofstede.com/media/654/6%20dimensions%20for%20website%20101123.txt> (07.05.2012, 11:15)
4. WIERZBICKA, ANNA, 1997. *Understanding Cultures Through Their Key Words: English, Russian, Polish, German, and Japanese: English, Russian, Polish, German, and Japanese*. Oxford University Press, 328 p.
5. ZAKHAROVA, U.S., 2013. Lexical representation of "orientation relationship / itself" as one of the dominant cultural meanings of "masculinity / femininity" (based on the English and Russian languages). *Bulletin of Tomsk State University.* 371, pp. 27-30.
6. WIERZBICKA, A., 1992. *Semantics, Culture, and Cognition: Universal Human Concepts in Culture-Specific Configurations*. Oxford University Press, 496 p.
7. CHERNYSHEV, V.I. (ed.), 1950-1965. *Dictionary of modern Russian literary language*. In 17 t. (ALS). Moscow; Leningrad: Publishing House of the USSR Academy of Sciences.
8. APRESIAN, Y.D., 2004. New explanatory dictionary of synonyms Russian language. In: *Under total. the leadership of Academician*. Moscow; Vienna: Languages of the Slavic culture: Vienna Slavonic Almanac, 1488 p.
9. 2005. *English-Russian dictionary of synonyms. Thesaurus*. Moscow: Foreign Language; [Publ] "Onyx", 412 p.
10. ABRAMOV, H., 2008. *Russian dictionary of synonyms and similar expressions on sense. 8<sup>th</sup> ed. Stereotype*. Moscow: Russian dictionaries: AST; Astrel; Keeper, 667 p.
11. BABENKO, L.G. (ed.), 2008. *Dictionary - Thesaurus Synonyms Russian speech*. Moscow: AST-PRESS book, 512 p. (Russian dictionaries).
12. EVGENYEVA, A.P. (ed.), 2007. *Russian Thesaurus*. Moscow: Astrel: AST, 648 p.
13. 2004. *Oxford Thesaurus of English*. Second edition. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1072 p.
14. LEECH, G., RAYSON, P. and WILSON, A., 2001. *Word Frequencies in Written and Spoken English: based on the British National Corpus*. London: Longman, 320 p. URL: <http://ucrel.lancs.ac.uk/bncfreq>

15. LYASHEVSKIY, N. and SHAROV S., 2009. *New frequency dictionary of Russian vocabulary*. Moscow: Azbukovnik (electronic version of the publication: Frequency dictionary of modern Russian (on the materials of the Russian National Corpus). URL: <http://dict.ruslang.ru/freq.php>
16. *Oxford Dictionaries Online*. URL: <http://oxforddictionaries.com>
17. *Online Dictionary Abby Lingvo Pro*. URL: <http://lingvopro.abbyonline.com>
18. GACHEV, G.D., 1998. *National images of the world: A course of lectures*. Moscow: Publishing Center “Academy”, 432 p.