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Language Representation of the "Masculinity / Femininity" Cultural Dimension Gender Values in Russian and English Phraseology

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Abstract

This study analyzes lexical representation of G. Hofstede's gender values illustrating the opposition of masculine and feminine national cultures. The lexical material of the research is English and Russian phrasecons. One of the values "maximum / minimum emotional and social role differentiation between the genders" is analyzed in more detail including quantitative (the number of representations) and qualitative aspects (their semantics). The results show that Russian phraseological units representing the masculine value dominate in number but they are more metaphorical than English phraseological units. The findings correlate with the sociological study results obtained by G. Hofstede.

Keywords: Language representation; masculinity / femininity; cultural dimension; gender; Russian; English; phraseology

1. Introduction

In 1980 Geert Hofstede, a Dutch social psychologist, presented to the academic society his cultural dimensions theory based on the group differentiation of national cultures. The groups were formed on the basis of these cultures mediums' key values, revealed by a statistical analysis of the sociological questionnaire results (Hofstede, 2001). One of the suggested dimensions is 'masculinity / femininity' based on the division of emotional and social roles between sexes (Hofstede, 1998). As a result of the psychologist's research MAS index (masculinity index) claim the

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English national culture to be masculine (the United Kingdom index is 66 out of 100) and the Russian national culture to be feminine (the Russia index is 36 out of 100) (Hofstede G. and Hofstede G. J. website).

We are interested in establishing the correlation between G. Hofstede's findings based on the sociological research and the findings that we plan to get as a result of the language and culture research based on the language material. The purpose of the current research is to state language representation of the masculine and feminine values of the cultural dimension that G. Hofstede suggested. The analysis involves Russian and English phraseological units (further PUs). The theoretical basis of the research is the key words theory by A. Wierzbicka that suggests that the most frequent lexical units are particularly important and revealing in a given culture (Wierzbicka, 1997).

2. Research design and methodology

The analytical method that we have elaborated consists of the following stages:

1) grouping the values that differ masculinity and femininity cultures into three groups according to the sphere of their actualization such as emotional, social and gender. The current paper is about the last group;

2) selecting phraseological units that represent these values (there are 21 values in the G. Hofstede's study) (Hofstede, 1998). The resources of the lexical material are "*Frazeologicheskii slovar' russkogo yazyka*" (1968) and «Longman idioms dictionary» (1998), their volumes are as close as possible (4000 and 6000 phraseological units respectively);

3) these PU-s quantitative and qualitative analyses (the definitions, emotional and stylistic remarks, additional ideas expressed) that provide us with an opportunity to state whether masculine or feminine values are more representative in the phraseological fund of the current language;

4) comparing these results to the G. Hofstede's ones we make a conclusion about the degree of their correlation.

There are three working assumptions for the following Russian and English phraseologies analysis: 1) the bigger amount of the phraseological units representing gender values in the lexicon of one language comparing to the other says for the higher masculinity index of the first linguaculture; 2) the simpler one speaks about something the more habitual and acceptable it is, therefore we suggest that the first-order representations express the highest masculinity index, the third-order representations express the lowest masculinity index, and the second order ones – the medium. So there should more first-order representations among English phraseological units, and more third-order representations among Russian phraseological units; 3) the current linguacultural analysis results and G. Hofstede's sociological research results will be regarded as correlating ones if the phraseological material favours English speakers' inclination to masculine values and Russian speakers' inclination to feminine values.

For the continuous sampling from the phraseological dictionaries mentioned above we have advanced the following requests: a phraseological unit is considered as a representation of the values being analyzed if:

1) its elements include one or more words that denote people of one or of both sexes (first-order representations), for example *базарная баба, ladies who lunch especially, ваш брат, the boys in blue*;

2) its definition includes one or more words that demotes people of one or of both sexes, or it includes an allusion to a person of a particular sex (second-order representations), for example *под каблуком* (1 – Being absolutely dependent, being in a complete obedience. Usually about a husband depending on his wife), *be tied to sb's apron strings* (1 – Used about someone who depends too much on their parents, especially their mother, for support, money, and advice about how to live life);

3) its elements include one or more words denoting a person metaphorically with an animal image (a female animal – a woman, a male animal – a man) (third-order representation), for example *мокрая курица, козел отпущения*.

2.1. Quantitative aspect

The continuous sampling and quantitative analysis show that the overall number of gender values representations is 36 English PUs and 33 Russian PUs (0,6% and 0,8% of the dictionaries' volumes respectively). Only 6 out of 21 values formulated by G. Hofstede (Hofstede, 2001) are realized in the language units (2 of them denoting attitude

toward strength and weakness are very close to each other and hence they will be joined for the sake of avoiding repetition of the representations). They are as follows:

- "different role models: fathers deal with facts, mothers with feelings / similar role models: both fathers and mothers deal with facts and feelings": 2 English PUs and 1 Russian PU;
- "girls cry, boys don't; boys should fight back, girls shouldn't fight / both boys and girls are allowed to cry but neither should fight; women should be gentle, and feminine; nobody should be weak / men allowed to be gentle, feminine, and weak": 4 English PUs and 8 Russian PUs;
- "chastity and industriousness for brides, not for grooms / same standards for brides and grooms": 2 English PUs and 4 Russian PUs;
- "teachers pay more attention to boys / teachers give equal attention to girls and boys": 1 English PU;
- "maximum / minimum emotional and social role differentiation between the genders": 26 English PUs and 21 Russian PUs.

The last value has the biggest number of phraseological representations presumably because of its liberal wording. The current paper is aimed at linguacultural analysis of this particular value.

2.2. Qualitative aspect

At the next stage of the research the phraseological representations of the gender value "maximum / minimum emotional and social role differentiation between the genders" are presented with their definitions. It enables us to analyze the correlation between them and the masculine and feminine cultures' characteristics suggested by G Hofstede.

The selected material demonstrates that all 47 PUs are masculine values' representations. It corresponds to the thesis of language androcentrism (*Slovar' gendernyh terminov*, 2002) and to the problem of revealing an unmarked opposition member.

Further the PUs are divided into groups according to the ideas they deliver. These ideas are not reflected in the sociological cultural dimensions theory but correlate with it.

The idea that *a man's dependence of a woman is intolerable* in English phrasecon is more frequent than in Russian. English *sb wears the pants (in the family)* and *sb wears the trousers (in the family/ house)* are second-order representations (because *pants* and *trousers* are men's clothes*)* and express impermissibility of the women's domination in a family (contradiction to a woman's social role). *A ladies' man*, *a roving eye* and Russian *мышиный жеребчик* (the second-order and the third-order representations at the same time) emphasize impropriety of a man's dependence of a women's party. *Отставной козы барабанщик*, a third-order representation (*коза* is a female, *барабанщик* is a male) shows a man's dependence of a female creature's status, though the definition lacks any hints to the sex of a person this PU can be used about.

A negative phenomenon of a universal character that is expressed via a female image – an idea characterized by linguistic gender discrimination. Vagrancy (*a bag lady*), selfishness *(La)*, anger (*hell hath no fury (like a woman scorned)*)) and idleness (*ladies who lunch especially*) are universal human phenomena and feelings that are ascribed to women.

An English idiom *mutton dressed as lamb* is a second-order and a third-order representation at the same time. This PU is used about a woman and the PU elements *mutton* and *lamb* mean female animals. In our life the existence of men dressing up as youngsters is quite realistic, so this behavior is not peculiar to women only.

The third-order representations *ни пава ни ворона*, *Лиса Патрикеевна*, *заблудшая овца (овечка)*, *змея подколодная*, *ворона в павлиньих перьях*, *белая ворона*, *продувная бестия (шельма)*, *бесструнная балалайка* express such human characteristics as uncertainty, cunning, loss, insidiousness, pomposity and garrulousness via female image again.

A neutral / positive phenomenon of a universal character that is expressed via a male image. All PUs *ваш брат, наш брат, свой брат, ни сват ни брат, господин (хозяин) своего слова (своему слову), the backroom boys*, *the boys in blue*, *the/a bad guy*, *fall guy*, *the/a good guy*, *separate / sort out the men from the boys,* can be used about

both men and women. There is an exception – *be one of the boys* – though it can be used about a woman if she is friends with a group of men and likes doing the things they do (Longman Idioms Dictionary, 1998).

This value representations analysis revealed the following peculiarities of the nouns denoting males: a) *брат* is a significant other; b) *брат* and *a boy* are the representations of a particular group one of the members of which is the speaker; c) *a guy*, *a man*, *a boy* mean any person. Moreover *a guy* in singular form is a male and in plural can be used for denoting a group made of people of both sexes, *a man* means a male person as well as a person in general.

The third-order representations *травленый (старый) волк* and *хоть волком вой* emphasize not the absence of the strength but impossibility of using it (wolf is a strong animal and strength is a masculine characteristics) that makes people sympathize those people that the PUs are used about.

A negative phenomenon of a universal character that is expressed via male image. Despite the fact that *no more Mr. Nice Guy!, sb is all mouth and (no) trousers, волк в овечьей шкуре* express variations of the censored behavior (injustice, breaking promises and hypocrisy) via a male image they are the feminine value representations because they illustrate the masculine value "maximum emotional and social role differentiation between the genders".

An unmarried woman is a deficient personality is expressed by means of such PUs – second-order representations as *в девках*, *старая дева*; *be (left) on the shelf*. The last one is even offensive because a woman is compared to the wares in a shop.

A woman is an object of a man's actions is expressed in PUs that describe a woman as somebody who can be bought, or who has to accept her husband's way of life while he doesn't bother about her desires: *a sugar daddy* и *a football/golf widow*.

Women have limited opportunities is expressed in the only one PU, a second-order representations *glass ceiling* in English.

Women are different from men and they are worse is expressed by two English PUs – the second-order representations: *on the rag* and *the fair sex*.

A wife is a man's burden is represented by *go stag* and *trouble and strife*.

3. Results

The representation analysis of the masculinity / femininity dimension gender value in the two languages phrasecons is complete. At the selection stage 26 English and 21 Russian phraseological representations of the masculine value "maximum emotional and social role differentiation between the genders" have been revealed. Taking into consideration the dictionaries volume it is 0,43% and 0,52 % of the total number of English and Russian PUs respectively. That means that masculine values are more represented in the Russian linguaculture. At the following stage of grouping representations according to their order this intermediate conclusion has changed due to the following facts. According to the second working supposition of the research the masculinity level decreases from the first- to the third-order representation. Judging from the qualitative stage there should be more the first-order representations in Russian and more third-order representations in English. The selected PUs-representations are:

the first-order: 15 English PUs (57, 7% of the total number of English phraseological representations of the value), 7 Russian PUs (33, 3%);

the second-order: 11 English PUs (42, 3%), 1 Russian PU (4, 8%);

the third-order: 0 English (0%) and 12 Russian PUs (57, 1%).

So the analysis showed that the first- and the second-order representations (vivid actualization) dominate in the English phrasecon and the third-order representations (hidden, metaphorical actualization) dominate in the Russian phrasecon. Hence, with the moderate prevailing of the Russian phraseological representations (0,52% versus 0,43%) more than a half of them are metaphorical (57,1%), at the same time a half of the English representations (57,7%) are vivid the first-order and a little bit less than a half (42,3%) are the second-order representations with no metaphorical ones.

4. Conclusion

On the basis of these findings we conclude that "maximum emotional and social role differentiation between the

genders" PU representations analysis reveals correlation between the value phraseological representations and the suggestion that Russian linguaculture has a lower masculinity level than English linguaculture. This in general correlates with G. Hofstede's findings in his sociological study. The specific feature of the language material is that the difference between Russian and English linguacultures in the masculinity values representation is not so dramatic as in G. Hofstede's research (36 versus 66 respectively (Hofstede G. & Hofstede G. J.'s official website)), and the difference is more obvious in the quality of the phraseological units than in their quantity.

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