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REPRESENTATION OF WOMAN IN PAREMIC WORLDVIEW (IN ENGLISH, FRENCH, OSSETIAN, TURKISH LANGUAGES)

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Abstract

The article examines the image of a woman as one of the most important components of the linguistic worldviews in England, France, Ossetia and Turkey. The authors study the problem through the paremias recorded in lexicographical sources. As a result of the analysis, the main conceptual features of the image are revealed, the image of a "woman" reflected in the minds of the speakers of English, French, Ossetian and Turkish languages is structured, and priority aspects in its linguistic understanding are derived as a representation of the cultures of the languages under study. An attempt is made to explain the common character and national specificity of the identified traits. The maximum number of proverbs and sayings with the lexeme "woman" is revealed in the dictionaries of the Ossetian language. The explication of the image of a woman in the English, French, Ossetian and Turkish linguistic consciousness is reflected in the emotive-evaluative component, synonymous relations, and the use of proper names. Despite the fact that the analysed languages represent different language families there are sufficient number of similarities in the perception of a woman. It should be noted that in general woman is regarded as a present or potential partner in marriage or a mother.

Keywords: Worldview, lexeme, lexical-semantic field, paremias

1. Introduction

The modern stage of research paradigms in linguistics is characterized by developments in cross-cultural communication and studies of relationship between language and culture within the framework of cultural and cognitive linguistics. The research in this sphere inevitably led to the linguistic analysis of national mentality through language to distinguish specific perception of the social realm and the traditions of national culture. The national-cultural peculiarities, mainly reflected in the thesaurus, are revealed in the comparative study of lexical-semantic fields as the main thesaurus-building structure. The lexical-semantic field "woman" is one of the universal concepts reflecting cultural, historical, religious, mythological, as well as biological views of the nation. This concept is formed by traditions and collective experience of the people, which allows us to "penetrate" to the mentality of the nation and to explicate the existing worldview, to define the universal and unique system of values. Moreover, gender issues are the centre of attention of a new interdisciplinary course in humanitarian studies named "gender linguistics", and paremia, being part of the folklore, is one of the forms of fixing the traditions and customs in the language, therefore it reflects the long-lasting wisdom of previous generations, the linguistic worldview and the national mentality most vividly (Chernoschekova, 2009; Issina & Mechsherskaya, 2013; Murashova, 2015).

2. Problem Statement

Studying the representation of a lexeme involves firstly analyzing its semantics, which means its philosophical and linguistic research. In this article we will mostly dwell on the representation of 'woman' from the linguistic angle.

2.1. Universal features in the representation of 'woman' in English, French, Ossetian and Turkish

It should be noted that the selection of languages allows us to compare the image of a woman in diametrically opposing cultures. The lexical-semantic field 'woman' in English, French, Ossetian and Turkish should inevitably explicate culturally relevant stereotypes and features. It is quite natural taking into consideration political, economic and cultural interaction that cannot fail to influence the mentality and vocabulary of peoples.

2.2. Specificity of 'woman' in the languages addressed

At the same time, each ethnos has their own background, traditions and beliefs that make themselves felt in the language. So, noteworthy and remarkable findings are expected to result from the present article, the more so that the lexeme 'woman' is objectively among the basic words of any language. The peculiarities in the representation are mostly connected with the history, folk traditions and cultural heritage of the ethnos (Corina, 2015; Dedova & Yang, 2020).

3. Research Questions

3.1. To define the constituents of the lexical-semantic field "woman" in the analysed languages

There are many words in each of the discussed languages that refer to a female human being both explicitly and implicitly. The lexical-semantic field comprises all the lexemes implying a woman, and it differs by language.

3.2. To establish the top-priority thematic groups in every language

In every language, there are examples of proverbs and sayings with prevailingly occurring and least frequently occurring lexemes. The quantitative results reflect immediately and precisely the position of a woman in each culture.

3.3. To identify the common universal and nationally specific lexemes and meanings of paremias referring to a woman

The comparative study of paremias helps to highlight the peculiarities in each language and reflects the linguistic consciousness and the culturally specific worldview of different peoples. The study of concepts is valuable because it helps us to identify a certain lingual-cultural community.

4. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to answer a rather difficult question: whether the linguistic representation of a woman in different languages and cultures is identical or not, what the degree of correlation of the linguistic worldview in the languages under study is. Linguistic representation of a woman comprises a layer of various lexical units, the analysis of which has allowed us to consider the studied image as a fragment of linguistic worldview.

4.1. Revealing lexical universals and differences

The analysis of the lexical-semantic field "woman" involves research content, structure, structural organization categories of every studied language system and highlights their specificity in each case.

4.2. Reasons and explanations

The linguistic processes are the product of human consciousness, regardless of the linguistic affiliation of the native speaker, since they reflect the result of perception of information from the surrounding world. This explains the common perception of things in different parts of the world in one given historic period and their common representation in different languages even belonging to divergent language families such as Indo-European and Turkic ones (Seliverstova, 2014; Semenenko, 2009).

5. Research Methods

The significance and place of a linguistic phenomenon are defined by numerous methods that are the means by which we gain knowledge of any language. The purpose and objectives of our research have led to the use of a number of methods such as enumerated below.

5.1. Continuous sampling method

It is used to select examples for the analysis and illustration of theoretical positions, i.e. to write out all the examples in a row from the source of the analysed phenomenon.

5.2. The descriptive method

It is one of the principal methods of language research, which consists in singling out specific linguistic phenomena and in consistent describing in terms of their structure or functions.

5.3. The comparative method

The comparative method is a description of one language through its systemic comparison with another language in order to clarify its peculiarities and typical features.

5.4. The method of component analysis

The method of component analysis is a method for studying units of a language, with the goal of decomposing meaning into minimal semantic components.

6. Findings

Altogether, there have been collected and analysed about 87 English, 123 French, 350 Ossetian and 94 Turkish proverbs and sayings with a lexeme denoting a female human being as their component. These are mainly grouped around the following words:

- *wife, woman, mother, daughter, lady, bride, maiden/maid, female, grandmother, mother-in-law, widow* in English (Speake, 2003);
- *femme* (woman, wife), *fille* (girl), *mère* (mother), *belle-mère* (mother-in-law), *princesse* (princess), *reine* (queen), *vierge* (virgin), *demoiselle* (girl, miss), *ange* (angel), *bru* (daughter-in-law), *marâtre* (stepmother), *mari* (wife), *veuve* (widow), *villaine* (naughty/bad girl) in French (Kogut, 2016);
- *ūs* (wife; woman), *mad* (mother), *ḱyzg* (girl; daughter), *sylgojmag* (woman), *æfsīn* (mother-in-law – husband's mother; lady of the house, hostess), *ḱynʒ* (daughter-in-law; sister-in-law – brother's wife), *Satana* (main female character from the Ossetian Nart epic), *syl* (female; woman; board), *badæg ḱyzg / abadgæ ḱyzg* (spinster, old maid), *xo* (sister), *mady xo* (maternal aunt), *idæʒ ūs* (widow), *nomylūs* (inferior wife of a wealthy feudal in Ossetia), *Mady Majræm* (Our Lady), *Agwyndæ* (female character from the Ossetian Nart epic), *fajnūst* (wife of husband's brother), *fydy xo* (paternal aunt), *ḱyzǵy ḱyzg* (granddaughter – daughter's daughter), *waǧd ūs* (divorced woman) in Ossetian (Gwutiaty, 1976);
- *kız* (girl; daughter), *ana* (mother), *kadın* (woman), *avrat* (broad; wife), *karı* (wife; woman, broad), *gelin* (bride; daughter-in-law; sister-in-law), *hanim* (lady of the house, hostess), *teyze* (maternal aunt), *hala* (paternal aunt), *güzel* (beauty), *dilber* (beauty, queen of hearts), *yar* (beloved, mistress, sweetheart), *elti* (sister-in-law – wife's sister), *kuma* (polygamist's wife in relation to other wives), *görece* (matchmaker), *dul* (widow) in Turkish (Ömer Asım Aksoy (1993); *Turkish proverbs.* Retrieved from: https://sozluk.gov.tr/).

In the languages that the present paper addresses, there are certain parallels and divergences in the lexical-semantic field 'woman'. Let us first dwell on similarities.

Proverbs and sayings with *woman / wife – femme – ūs / sylgojmag – kadin / kari / avrat* reflect both positive and negative characteristics of a female human being, as well as her position in the society and men's attitude towards her (Sereda & Gerasimova, 2019). She is simultaneously good and evil; there is duality in her nature. A woman's priority is her family, so a significant number of these proverbs reflect the way marriage affects the wife, and depict her as the homemaker, the partner who the atmosphere and general well-being of the house depend on. They show a woman's wisdom, modesty, kindness and influence on a man, the importance of a woman's presence in a house, her diligence and hardworking nature as the foundation of family and home:

- *He that will thrive must first ask his wife;*
- *Acy mæng dunejy xorz ūsæj xwyzdær xorz næj (In this imperfect world there is nothing better than a good wife);*
- *Evi ev eden avrat (A woman makes a house home).*

However, the negative character traits of a woman – loudness, nastiness, quarrelsomeness, holiness – are not overlooked, either. The bulk of the proverbs and sayings with this lexeme depict a woman as a dangerous, talkative, cantankerous human being, who also lacks intelligence (Diaz Ferrero & Quero Gervilla, 2018; Isachenko, 2017):

- *Man, woman, and devil, are the three degrees of comparison;*
- *Femmes sont anges à l'église, diables à la maison et singes au lit (Women are angels in church, devils at home, and monkeys in bed);*
- *Fydūsæn īngæn arfdær k'axync (A deeper grave is dug for a bad woman);*
- *Kadın erkeğin şeytanıdır (A woman is a man's devil);*

In English, Ossetian and Turkish, proverbs with 'mother' as a female parent are frequently found (in French *mère (mother)* is used in the prevailing majority of cases in the meaning of some kind of source and only periodically in the connotation of a female parent). Mother is respected, honoured and believed to be the source of wisdom and eternal love. The image of a mother is exclusively positive and closely associated with the image of a child, especially daughter:

- *A mother's love never ages;*
- *Fortune est aujourd'hui à un homme mère et demain lui sera marâtre (Fortune is today a man's mother and tomorrow will be a stepmother);*
- *Mady cæf næ rīssy (Mother's slap does not ache);*
- *Ananın bastığı yavru incinmez (A child who was stepped on by mother will not hurt himself).*

Great importance in English, French, Ossetian and Turkish paremias is also attached to other kinship terms and to a young girl, which is justified since, to begin with, much was expected from all females – young and old, unmarried and married – in terms of morale, appearance, behaviour and ability to run the house. Besides, all complex interrelations are reflected in these proverbs and sayings:

- *Maidens should be meek till they be married;*
- *Rarement voit-on belle-mère, caresser ou bien aimer (Rarely do we see stepmother, who cares or loves);*

- *Ḱyzg æmæ ḱynʒ æfsærmæj bæzzync (Respecting decorum does fit a girl and a daughter-in-law), Fajnūst fajnūsty ryn u (Sisters-in-law (wives of two brothers) are thorns in each other's sides);*

- *Çirkin karı evi toplar, güzel karı düğün gezer (A plain wife will clean the house, a beautiful one will go to a wedding).*

In French, proverbs with the lexeme *fille* (12) emphasize the ardent desire of a girl to be married or the easiness of her being seduced. Judging by French sayings, a word in question denotes a young, immature woman, especially an unmarried one: *C'est chose fâcheuse à garder que jeune fille à marier (Neither a lock nor a bolt will keep a young girl from getting married); Fille et ville qui parlementent sont à moitié rendues (The girl and the city that have entered into negotiations are not difficult to invade).*

In all four languages we find paremias with proper names. In English it is *Jack is as good as Jill* that states that woman / daughter is no worse than man / son. In French it is *C'était du temps où la reine Berthe filait (In the days of yore, in the time of queen Bers).* (The proverb refers to the 8th century when ladies spent their days spinning wool with spindles, as Queen Bertha did, Bertrada of Laon, wife of Pepin the Short and the mother of Charlemagne.)

In Ossetian such paremias include the following proper names: *Mady Majræm (Our Lady), Satana and Agwyndæ* – the last two are the female characters of Ossetian mythology, the famous Nart sagas. We will quote a few proverbs and sayings with *Satana*: *Ne 'fsīn Satana (Our hostess Satana), Xorz æfsīn Satana, Nartæn zond cī amydta, jæ dywwadæs k'æbīcy xærd æmæ noztæj ʒag kæmæn wydysty (Satana, a good lady of the house, who gave advice to the Narts and whose twelve storerooms were full of food and drinks), Sæ bægæny – Satanajy fyx (Their beer was brewed by Satana;* it means that the beer is very tasty*), Satanajy bærkad (The affluence and abundance inherent in Satana).* The paremias listed above, firstly, testify to the prestige and brilliant qualities of Satana and the popularity of the Nart sagas and this mythological heroine among Ossetians, even nowadays, with her, of divine descent, being the embodiment of best features in a woman; secondly, they rank a woman thus spoken of very highly as if comparing her with Satana in some aspects.

The only onym used for denoting females is the name *Fatmacık* – diminutive for *Fatma* (2). The diminutive attests to an ironic attitude to the person described as well as to the situation in general: *Düğünde Fatmacığı kim bilir? (Who knows Fatma at the wedding?), Fatmacığın adı mı okunur? (Is Fatma's name read?).* The paremia is in use when at public gatherings (weddings, meetings, etc.) a smartly dressed girl thinks she will be enjoying everyone's attention but is disappointed at being generally ignored.

There are also many cases where parallels can be drawn between two of the four languages under consideration. Thus, Ossetian and Turkish paremias contain the idea that a daughter's birth is a far less desirable and joyous occasion than that of a son: *Irystony læppūjy rajgₒyrd styr cīn wyd, ḱyzǵy rajgₒyrd ta – styr mast (In Ossetia the birth of a boy was considered to be a happy event, while the birth of a girl was a great misfortune)* and *Oğlan doğuran övünsün, kız doğuran dövünsün (May she, who gave birth to a boy, be proud of it, may she, who gave birth to a girl, weep).*

It is interesting to note that in Ossetian and Turkish we find paremias in which a female and a horse are mentioned: *Sylgojmag æmæ bæhy sæ cydæj vzarync (A woman and a horse are chosen by the*

way they walk) and Turkish *Atta, avratta uğur vardır (A horse and a woman bring good luck), Yaya gözüyle at, bekar gözüyle kız alma (Do not buy a horse considering it from a pedestrian's viewpoint, do not marry a girl considering her from a bachelor's viewpoint).*

And again, in Ossetian and Turkish proverbs maternal aunt is mentioned, and in a positive way in both languages: *Mady xojæ mady ad cæwy (Mother's sister is like mother).* The only Turkish paremia with *teyze* 'maternal aunt' stresses the idea that she treats her nephews and nieces tenderly and is closer to them than other (most likely, paternal) aunts.

The English paremias with the word *lady* distinguish English from other languages. A lady is the most beautiful and accomplished woman, representing the higher society and the most refined class, whose heart is not easy to win: *Faint heart never won fair lady; Far-fetched and dear-bought is good for ladies.*

7. Conclusion

Thus, the role of a woman in society, the way she was depicted and perceived in the languages under consideration and, consequently, in these cultures, is presented by four types of words / phrases, related to or presented by: 1 – general designators (with and without attributes), 2 – kinship terms, 3 – marital status, and 4 – proper names. The idea of subordination of the feminine to the masculine is expressed in the mentality of all four peoples – the bearers of the languages we touch upon in this article. British paremias testify to the concept of family consisting only of the immediate family members, while other relatives are not significant. In French, constituents of the lexical-semantic field 'woman" but for lexeme "femme" are few in numbers, almost insignificant as if women in France functioned purely as prospective mothers and wives. Other social positions and roles were of no great importance. Turkish proverbs and sayings reflect the traditional patriarchal view of a woman's place in society. The social roles of a woman are associated, first of all, with her role and functions in the family, her destiny to be a daughter, bride, wife, mother. The general conclusions concerning all four languages are represented schematically in the Figure 1:
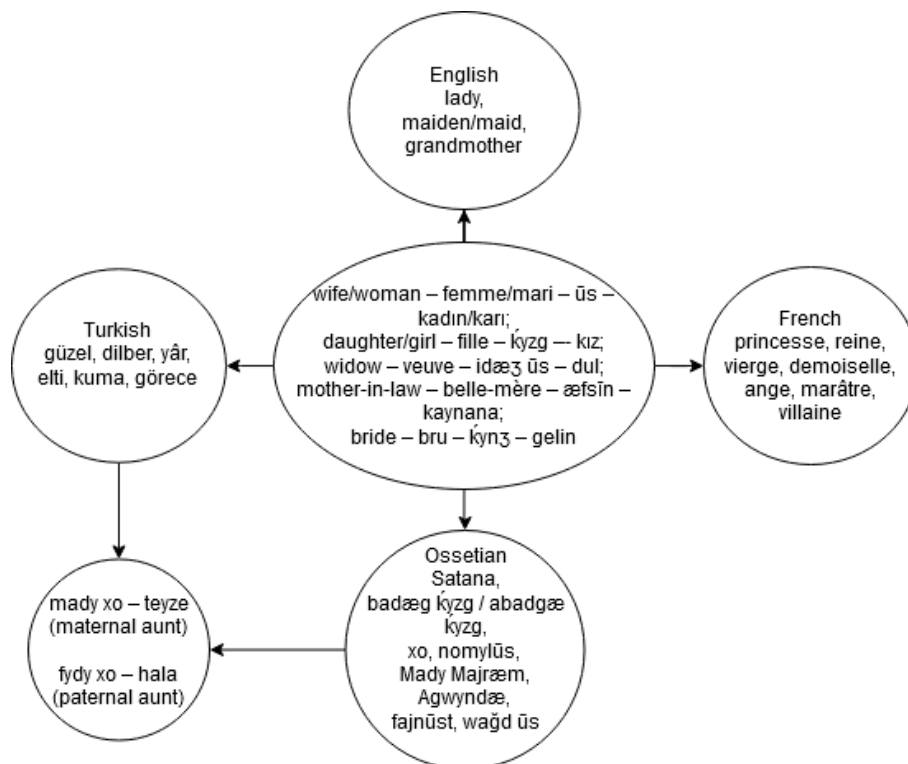
Figure 1. Semantic parallels in the representation of a woman in English, French, Ossetian and Turkish paremiology

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