

ISCKMC 2022**International Scientific Congress «KNOWLEDGE, MAN AND CIVILIZATION»****AXIOLOGICAL AND GENDER COMPONENTS IN NEOLOGISMS
NAMING THE CHARACTERS OF FILM DISCOURSE**

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Abstract

The article deals with English-language neologisms that name the characters of film discourse. Film discourse is considered as a combination of linguistic and extralinguistic factors of a film, its interpretation by a viewer, and intertext with other types of art for the presence of axiological and gender components in their definitions and contextual field. The definitions and the context of some neologisms (and sometimes the neologism itself as a lexical item or set of lexemes) contain positive or negative colored lexemes; this allows concluding that the attitude of the audience to this or that character. A particular set of characteristics inherent in the characters and influencing the audience's attitude towards them is described. It has been noticed that not always protagonists impress the public, and antagonists meet the audience's disapproval. Sometimes the opposite situation develops, as evidenced by the corresponding lexemes in the definitions and the context of these neologisms, as well as the recognition by the audience of some antagonists and the unpopularity of some protagonists. Among the considered neologisms there were also such lexical units, in which there is also a gender component. In this case, lexemes with gender potential often refer to gender stereotypes accepted in society. Some neologisms name female or male characters, but often the neologism is gender-neutral. When selecting neologisms, their definitions and contextual field, electronic dictionaries, news websites, and sites whose main theme is film language and the cinematic universe were used.

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1. Introduction

Consideration of the neologisms of film discourse, understood by us following Samkova (2011) as a combination of film text, the message put into the film by its creators, the audience's interpretation, as well as the intertext of film work with other types of art seems to be a relevant topic for several reasons. Firstly, cinema is one of the most sought-after art forms at present, and film discourse provides a wide field of study for linguists, sociologists, and culturologists as a source of examples of verbal and non-verbal communication, human behaviourism, translation or interpretation of value attitudes. Secondly, the neologisms' consideration is interesting from the point of view of attachment to time, determining the relevance of certain phenomena for the present.

About gender in cinematography wrote Prima (2013), Dokhova and Cheprakova (2013), Prosutsova (2010), Busso and Vignozzi (2017) and Potekhin (2017). The axiology of neologisms is devoted to the works of Katermina and Solovieva (2019), Yurova (2021), Lipiridi (2020) and Solovyova (2014). The article analyses neologisms taken from dictionaries or websites specializing in film terms to identify an axiological and gender component in their composition. Based on the analysis, will be elicited who evaluates the movie characters and what criteria they use.

2. Problem Statement

The paper considers the axiological and gender components as part of the definitions and context of neologisms that name the characters of film discourse. In the process of its cognitive activity associated with the formation of a system of meanings (concepts) informing about the current or possible state of things in the world, the cognitive subject (including the audience) acts as an active person, therefore, his activity is accompanied by an emotional and evaluative perception of reality (Gibatova, 2011). There is also an "extreme polarization of gender roles" in cinematic discourse (Busso & Vignozzi, 2017). Both components, axiological and gender, are interesting to study in the context of film discourse. The axiological component in the neologisms of film discourse has not been studied enough. Some researchers addressed gender in film discourse (for example, Prima, Dokhova, and Cheprakova), but the neologisms of film discourse with a gender component have been little studied.

3. Research Questions

The article answers the following questions:

- i. What neologisms are used to name popular characters in cinematic discourse?
- ii. Definitions and contextual fields of what neologisms naming film discourse characters have evaluative and gender components?
- iii. Who evaluates the characters of film discourse?

4. Purpose of the Study

The paper aims to consider the English-language neologisms that name the characters of film discourse to identify axiological and gender components in their definitions and context.

5. Research Methods

The article uses the content analysis method, which involves the systematic processing, evaluation, and interpretation of the form and content of the information source (in this case, electronic dictionaries, news sites, and thematic websites), as well as the continuous sampling method, which consists in isolating the required factual material according to the degree of occurrence of the corresponding lexical units in the text. An additional method is a contextual analysis, which allows considering the studied material in the totality of the relationships of its elements.

6. Findings

Characters as the participants in film discourse play a significant role in understanding the picture as a whole and forming the audience's attitude to this picture. The versatility of the characters under consideration makes it possible to globalize the conclusions, taking them beyond the scope of the English-speaking environment.

Let us analyze the neologisms that name the characters of film discourse and contain axiological and gender components as part of definitions and context.

Some characters impress the audience for one reason or another, and a positive characteristic can be traced in the neologisms that call them. The neologism “difficult man,” introduced into film discourse by Brett Martin in 2013, is used to refer to an attractive anti-hero: these are often unhappy, complex, deeply human characters (“complicated,” “deeply human”). They evoke both sympathy and disgust, a sense of identification, and implied complicity in their darkest deeds (Kakutani, 2013). Such a phenomenon is found in pictures that reveal the depth of an antagonist, telling about his past, and the reasons for the existing character. On the news platforms of The New York Times, The Guardian, and The New Republic, the “difficult man” is viewed precisely as an attractive anti-hero who has won the public attention with his ambiguity and versatility. The ranking of the ten most “difficult characters” gives a possible explanation for the current trend of choosing tv-shows with a less than ideal protagonist: maybe viewers like to watch bad people do bad things; maybe viewers see one selves in these complex characters (Hao, 2016).

Such heroes are characterized in two ways, but rather positively, as the audience empathizes with them and understands them. As for the gender coloring in the composition of this neologism, it is necessary to pay attention to the fact that the term itself contains the masculine lexeme “man.” Refuting the possibility of using this lexeme in this case as gender-neutral, mention that the examples of “difficult heroes” are most often male characters: Doctor House from the series of the same name, Elliot Elderson from the series “Mr. Robot,” Hannibal from the tv-series of the same name, Tony Soprano from The Sopranos and Walter White from Breaking Bad.

Speaking of characters with whom the viewer identifies, it is also worth mentioning the concept of “audience surrogate”: this is a character that the audience sympathizes with, seeing themselves in his place, a character who asks the same questions as the audience, or is confused by the same things that the audience does (Marshall, 2017). Such characters are often present in fantastic plots: for example, Harry Potter is an audience surrogate, since he, together with the viewer, having gotten into the magical world,

is surprised at everything that happens. However, he also appears in stories of another genre: for example, Dr. Watson in the stories about Sherlock Holmes is also a spectator surrogate, asking those questions that a viewer or reader would ask, marveling at Sherlock's abilities, like a viewer or reader. They are often liked by the public, allow the viewer to feel like a part of the picture, and help the gradual "introduction to the plot." The gender coloring of this neologism is neutral.

A related term is "author surrogate." In this case, the character is closer to the author than to the viewer, fulfilling the role of the author's attorney in the story (Marshall, 2017). The attitude towards the author's surrogate is generally disapproving:

Author surrogacy is most notable in works of fan fiction or by amateur writers <...>. Bella from Stephanie Meyer's *Twilight* has often been criticized for being described as a spitting image of the author. As Bella is idealized as a perfect character (sometimes known as Mary Sue or Marty Stu) it can come across as pompous or even narcissistic. It doesn't come across as humble, and that can quickly turn off readers (Marshall, 2017, p. 2).

The presence of unattractive characters in the film can alienate the viewer. One of them is Mary Sue, a female character invented by the author who is so perfect that it is annoying (MacMillan Dictionary, 2001). Mary Sue's gender opposite, Marty Stu (as known as Gary Stu), is a seemingly perfect male character with no flaws who always wins over other characters; a boring male protagonist who always defeats his opponents without doing anything for it and without even breaking a sweat, has no weaknesses, has a soft character (Urban Dictionary, 2014). As we can see, the definition of Marty Stu, as well as its gender opposite, contains a negative connotation. The lexemes as "seemingly", "boring", and "without paying any price or breaking a sweat" are alarming, as well as such impeccability of the hero.

However, Mary Sue is sometimes used as a gender-neutral character name: several bloggers have claimed that Blomkvist, whose career parallels that of his author, is Larsson's Mary Sue, his alter ego, a character too beloved to be imperfect (Seltzer, 2010).

Along with Mary Sue and Marty Stu, Knight Templar is worth mentioning. This character is blinded by himself and his ideals, and this extreme turns into sociopathy. They consider themselves unconditionally right and are merciless towards those they consider evil. The Knight Templar tends to regard all crimes as equal. Minor offenses, even crossing the road in the wrong place, entail such severe punishments as imprisonment, execution, or eternal torture (TV Tropes, 2015). Such lexemes as "get blinded," "extreme," and "tyrannical sociopathy" have a negative connotation. The description of such characters is universal and can be applied to both male and female characters.

Other neologisms with connotative and gender components that name archetypal movie characters are Manic Pixie Dream Girl (MPDG) and its gender counterpart Manic Pixie Dream Guy/Boy (MPDB). Manic Dream Girl (MPDG) is a concept coined by film critic Nathan Rabin after watching *Elizabethtown*. This term he proposed to call pretty, social, eccentric heroines, created by the imagination of sensitive writer-directors. The sole purpose of such a heroine is to help brooding male characters have fun and enjoy life (Urban dictionary, 2014). The description of the dream girl is positive, but the emphasis is on the illusory, implausible ideality of this image: "exists solely in the fevered imaginations

of sensitive writer-directors” (Urban dictionary, 2014). Less commonly used is the neologism Manic Pixie Dream Guy/Boy, which refers to a quirky, attractive, and misunderstood guy who appreciates the main character for something that is not related to her career or personal goals (Miller, 2021). The difference between MPDG and MPDB is that the guy does not pay attention to the rules and is not responsible for his actions. He knows what is wrong in the main character's life, even if she does not see it as a problem (Miller, 2021). In general, the dream guy, just like the dream girl, seems unrealistic in its ideality: “constant spontaneous displays of affection are unrealistic” (Miller, 2021).

A similar concept to MPDG is the Perky Female Minion (known as Genki Girl), an optimistic girl with exuberant energy, in sharp contrast to the male character, often gloomy (Big Bad, gloomy) (TV Tropes). Again, lexemes are used that indicate emotionality as a typical female trait. The liveliness and vigor of such heroines are usually contrasted with the gloominess of male characters. Recall the movie protagonist of Elizabethtown, with whom the term “manic dream girl” is associated. Drew is a brooding, less emotional guy in public: “Our narrator’s thoughtful voice belongs to Drew,” “the voice continues helpfully, calm but resigned” (Crowe, 2003). While Claire is the exact opposite: “she is an intent listener, nodding slightly, collecting information like a detective assembling clues to a murder” (Crowe, 2003), “that’s so funny it makes me cry” (Crowe, 2003).

A similar description of the female and male characters is found in the pairing term Savvy guy / Energetic girl: this is a potential relationship, platonic or not, between a pragmatic guy and an energetic girl (TV Tropes, 2015).

If the manic dream girl (MPDG) and her gender opposite (MPDB) are described positively, except for the fact that both seem unrealistic, and the neologisms Perky Female Minion, Genki Girl, Energetic girl are very similar to Manic Pixie Dream Girl, then the concepts of Savvy guy and Big Bad differ from the aforementioned rather in negative coloring: “gloomy” and “pragmatic”.

A gendered term is also the notion of “Jock”: film jocks vary by stereotype. Hero, dumb, rude, violent, the guy who dates the cheerleader, and the goofball. Film drama jocks are typically either aggressive or the hero like Mox in ‘Varsity Blues’ or Fred ‘The Ogre’ Palowakski from ‘Revenge of the Nerds’ (Ranker Film, 2021). These are such characters, usually, athletes, who do not have large intellectual potentialities and are translators of a masculine stereotype: this is indicated by the negatively colored lexemes “rude,” “violent” and “aggressive.”

A similar but gender-neutral neologism is “ditz”: “a character whose defining characteristic is profound stupidity or quirkiness. In fiction, female ditzes tend to be sweet and naive, while male ditzes tend to be oafish but lovable” (TV Tropes, 2015). From the definition, we can conclude that both the male and female representative of the “ditz,” being stupid, still impresses the public.

When talking about characters who are in the clouds, they use the neologism “cloudcuckoolander:” “a character with their head in the clouds. They are very cheerful and strangely oblivious to things that everyone else takes for granted” (TV Tropes, 2015). Such characters often attract an audience and rarely have evil intentions: “they can be oddly endearing,” “rarely malicious,” and “they often come off as naïve, innocent” (TV Tropes, 2015). As can be seen from the context of this neologism, it has a positive connotation. Such characters are often accompanied by another hero, who acts as a kind of guardian of the cloudcuckoolander's minder. This character, whether friend or hired, is keeping an eye

on clouducuckoolander. He accompanies the eccentric and tries to prevent trouble (TV Tropes, 2015). The gender identity of such a character, as well as that of his strange ward, is not mentioned.

Some characters only pretend to be clouducuckoolanders. They are called Crouching Moron, Hidden Badass. On the surface, they are fools: the kind of people who can't be trusted to screw in a light bulb because they could hurt themselves, and they are most of the time. Then someone presses the right button at the right time—and everything suddenly changes: the goofy smile disappears, their eyes start to glow, and an energy aura surrounds them (TV Tropes, 2015). The presence of such lexemes as “moron” and “badass” as part of the neologism emphasizes the negative attitude of the viewers towards such characters.

Another archetypal character is Evil Twin. The evil twin is an antagonist, usually portrayed by the same actor who plays the protagonist. The external difference between the characters is achieved through tricky camera shots, mustaches, clothes, glasses, etc. Today, the appearance of evil twins of positive characters is not uncommon (Lisa Kudrow as Phoebe and Ursula Buffay in Friends, Tom Hardy as Reggie and Ronnie Cray in Legend or Mike Myers as Austin Powers and Dr. Evil in the Austin Powers film series). Such a character is characterized exclusively negatively: as a “nasty counterpart” (Urban Dictionary, 2014), “wreaks havoc or does evil” (The Free Dictionary, 2005). This term is similar to “Oddball Doppelgänger”: the character would be the long-lost twin of another character. But then the audience start to notice the differences. It could be due to having a completely opposite personality (can be of the same alignment though doesn't have to be an Evil Twin). It could be due to exaggerating the original character's foibles (TV Tropes, 2015). Unlike an evil twin, an oddball doppelgänger is not necessarily an antagonist. He only has certain qualities that are not inherent in his double.

The opposition “Red Oni/Blue Oni” is in the same row: this concept denotes two characters that are somehow essentially connected. Red Oni, usually the more passionate and emotional, can also be the calmer and more flexible of the two. Blue Oni, stoic and brooding, can hide a volatile, restless disposition, ready to flare up if taken too far (TV Tropes, 2015). These characters can be both women and men.

Worth mentioning is the neologism “original character” (known as OC), denoting a character of a franchise created by a fan and placed in this franchise with the help of art and fanfiction (Urban Dictionary, 2014). In the context, there is a generally negative connotation of such characters: “Many of them also happen to be Mary Sues with self-insert fanfics and copy/paste backstories. The creators of them are also known for being very egotistical about them, going as far as putting copyrights on them, telling others not to steal their (possibly stolen anyway) character, and even abusing the report systems at various sites just to be sure nobody will steal their OC” (Urban Dictionary, 2014).

7. Conclusion

Summing up the results, it can be concluded that the definitions, the contextual field, and sometimes even the composition of the neologisms themselves contain an axiological component that indicates the audience's attitude (we also include film critics among them) toward the named characters. It

is the viewers, who evaluate how believable, attractive, or vice versa, unattractive and implausible this or that hero is. Among the lexemes indicating a positive assessment of the characters by the viewer, one can name “complicated,” “deeply human,” “the same,” “lovable,” “endearing,” “rarely malicious,” and “naïve,” “innocent.” The following lexemes indicate a negative assessment of the characters by the audience: “amateur,” “criticize,” “pompous,” “narcissistic,” “turn off readers,” “seemingly,” “boring,” “get blinded,” “extreme,” “sociopath,” “fevered imaginations,” “unrealistic,” “gloomy,” “pragmatic,” “rude,” “violent,” “aggressive,” “dumb,” “evil,” “nasty,” “abusing.” Based on the definitions and context of film discourse neologisms of the corresponding lexemes, it can be concluded that the viewer is more often impressed by complex, similar, kind, naive characters, where the lexemes “complex” and “naive” can be considered as contextual antonyms. While often evil, gloomy, boring, and blinded by some idea, aggressive and unrealistic characters are more likely to alienate the viewer. However, not always the plot antagonist will be negatively perceived by the public: for example, there is an attractive anti-hero “difficult man.”

In addition to the axiological component in the definitions and context of some of the considered neologisms, there is a gender component that refers to existing gender stereotypes: among the lexemes indicating a masculine stereotype, one can name “aggressive,” “rude,” “gloomy,” “pragmatic,” “overpower” etc.; lexemes indicating a feminine stereotype are “energetic,” “emotional,” “cheerful.” These gender stereotypes are a reflection of the ideas that have been established in society about the behavior and appearance of men and women. These stereotypes affect the audience's minds, being broadcast in film discourse, forming the image of a reference image or behavior of a representative of one gender or another.

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