

WUT 2020
10th International Conference “Word, Utterance, Text: Cognitive, Pragmatic and Cultural Aspects”

**FEMINISM CONCEPTUAL MEANINGS IN RUSSIAN AND
FRENCH MEDIA PICTURE OF THE WORLD**

Elena V. Dziuba (a)*, Yuliya G. Tkachenko (b)

*Corresponding author

(a) Dziuba E.V., Ural State pedagogical University, Shefskaya 104 – 84 Yekaterinburg, Russia, elenacz@mail.ru
(b) Tkachenko Yu. G., Ural State Pedagogical University, Yekaterinburg, Repina 101-127, Russia, tka55@yandex.ru

Abstract

The article considers the position of the interdependence of language and cognition based on the analysis of lexemes that represent the structure of the conceptual field of FEMINISM. The research is comparative and refers to Russian and French media texts published from 2012 to 2018 actualizing feminism ideas. By contextual and conceptual analysis methods the authors present the content specificity of the conceptual field of FEMINISM in Russian and French language picture of the world (media picture of the world) revealing the similarity of conceptual structures of FEMINISM phenomenon with the dominant presence of the following meanings: *freedom, equality in different spheres of life (education, choice of profession, involvement in the political life of the state), conscious choice in deciding on maternity* and others. The conceptual component that is specific to Russian media picture of the world is *negative attitude to men*, not identified in the analyzed French media texts, distinguished by the component of *verbalisation of violence*. This allows to express the idea that in some Russian mass media the feminism idea is presented not as an intention to protect women rights and freedoms, a call to solve social problems, but as a means of gender society division which leads to discrediting feminism itself. On the other hand, printed publications play a leading role in updating the subject and creating new meanings in relation to the position of women in family and society, the specificity of which is due to socio-historical factors of development of Russia and France.

2357-1330 © 2020 Published by European Publisher.

Keywords: Language, cognition, conceptual structures of knowledge, language picture of the world, feminism.



This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial 4.0 Unported License, permitting all non-commercial use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

1. Introduction

The study of the language picture of the world representing a semantic space of the language and carrying information about the world allows to get into the cognitive sphere of the collective consciousness of the people speaking the language, makes it possible to identify cognitive patterns and features of reality interpretation and construction set by certain language models. The language picture of the world consolidates the knowledge about the surrounding reality, and its individual fragments demonstrate the worldview specificity (Babenko & Cui, 2019).

The results of a comparative analysis of national language pictures of the world confirm the relationship between language and cognition and illustrate ethnospecific features of the formation of cognitive structures, "materialized" by means of lexical and grammatical units of national languages.

Language in its semantics (especially in the semantics of lexical and phraseological units) displays mental, cognitive and interpretative processes of reality knowledge. Significations are mobile and can change at the conceptual level for extralinguistic and intralinguistic reasons (Zabotkina, 2015). Comprehension of the language (native, nonnative or foreign) through significations of lexical and grammatical units reflects not only the assimilation of language signs forming the linguistic and communicative competence, but also the assimilation of the features of thinking and cognition inherent in the collective consciousness of native speakers.

Language pictures of the world are being interpenetrated under the influence of the processes of historical interaction of peoples and intercultural communication, their mutual enrichment with conceptual meanings is due to the expansion of the semantic content of a particular fragment. One of the most striking manifestations of these processes is lexical borrowings, which lead not just to the creation of a new word in the recipient language, but to changes in existing conceptual structures with the possibility of making other linguistic and cognitive phenomena.

2. Problem Statement

The relevance of the tasks is shown by the importance of comparative analysis of language pictures of the world in the modern expansion of cross-cultural relations, the possibility of confirming the positive impact of lexical borrowing processes on the receiving language picture of the world as a process of enriching the corresponding collective cognitive consciousness.

The hypothesis of this study is the idea that a lexical unit borrowed from the donor language by the recipient language partly transforms its language picture of the world by coming significations that convey a particular sense component of the concept as a linguo-cognitive phenomenon, expressing its "communicative relevant part" (as cited in Maklakova & Sternin, 2015, p. 39). In this case, the concept, according to Babushkin and Sternin (2018), is the result of human cognitive activity and is defined as a "discrete mental element, the basic unit of the thought code", which represents a set of cognitive features (including categorical) about the object of knowledge" (p. 5). When a new lexeme enters the language, a partial transformation of the receiving cognitive space takes place, and new knowledge about a reality fragment is formed. At the same time, this process may be long-term due to some historical events that led

to the expansion of the sense content of the original external concept and its assimilation with the new socio-cultural environment.

The interpenetration of national language pictures of the world can be seen in the course of comparative study of Russian-and French texts that represent components of the sense field of FEMINISM.

3. Research Questions

The object of the research is conceptual meanings of the linguo-cognitive phenomenon of FEMINISM represented in Russian and French media texts. The subject of the study is universal and ethno-specific components of the sense field of FEMINISM which are identified through lexicographic, contextual and conceptual analysis in French and Russian media texts.

Research material. Text analysis of Russian and French periodicals *Marianne*, *Paris Match*, *Express*, *Caquette*; *Rossiyskaya gazeta*, *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, *Veche*, *Literaturnaya gazeta*, electronic resources of *France Inter*, *Rain TV* channel for the period from 2012 to 2018, representing ideas of authors comprehending the social phenomenon of feminism. The criterion for selecting texts is the highlighting of women social status problems by chosen electronic and printed publications.

4. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the research is components comparing of the sense field of the phenomenon of FEMINISM in the French and Russian media picture of the world given the established influence of French picture of the world on recipient Russian language picture of the world.

5. Research Methods

Methods used: conceptual-contextual, comparative. The conceptual analysis is based on the semantic study of the maximum possible number of lexical units that represent the concept of FEMINISM that gives the possibility of reaching the level of semantic features abstraction in their cognitive interpretation, namely, finding sense components that determine the content of the studied linguo-cognitive phenomenon.

6. Findings

One of the first French philosophers writing about the need for women's freedom and equality was Charles Fourier. Influenced by his philosophical teachings, the word *feminism* originally appears in French in 1837 defined as "*doctrine qui a pour objet l'extension des droits civils et politiques à la femme*" (Larousse). The Russian language includes the word *feminism* in the early twentieth century when the "Complete dictionary of foreign words" of 1907 specifies *feminism* as "a movement in society and in literature aimed at the liberation of women, the expansion of their rights in all areas and recognition of the equality of women with men" (Full dictionary of foreign words, 1907, p. 406). In a similar dictionary of 1861, published in St. Petersburg, there is no article on *feminism* yet.

One of the basic conditions of borrowing foreign words is not only the contact between the language-source and the recipient language, but also, as noted by Krysin (2000) the presence of favorable conditions when the society itself is predisposed to new borrowing and feels the need to name new phenomena. Nefedova (2018) discusses the communicative need for borrowing, which can take place in several linguistic cultures. This is true because various restrictions promoted by the Russian state since the beginning of the XIX century against women in the professional, social, and family spheres, the development of capitalism, the abolition of serfdom contributed to the birth of the Russian women's movement.

When comparing the above definitions of the lexeme *feminism* presented in French and Russian dictionaries, it is necessary to note their relative mutual correspondence in reference to the sense component of the GOAL of the feminist movement, cf.: *l'extension des droits civils et politiques à la femme / the extension of women's rights in all areas* (Dictionnaire électronique Larousse, 2019). The Russian dictionary definition of 1907 is more detailed in terms of content, additionally providing the signification of *liberation, equality with a man*. Also, FEMINISM is treated here as a movement, and in the French dictionary entry as a doctrine. Since the beginning of the XVIII century, French feminism has been represented by numerous theoretical ideas that preceded the Russian feminism of the XIX century which was formed primarily as an activist movement.

The study of Russian and French media texts including the period from 2012 to 2018 allowed to find out new significations of the feminism lexeme and additional sense components of the linguo-cognitive phenomenon of FEMINISM that indicates a significant expansion of the nominative field of the studied concept in the Russian and French picture of the world.

The mass media, as noted by Rogozina (2003), construct a special media picture of the world, which is a model of reality fragments existing at the mental level and presented in media texts. Media text, as a product of mass media, forms a picture of the world, which focuses on social processes and issues that are often defined by journalists themselves (Ozyumenko, 2019). The analysis of media texts allows us to reconstruct to a certain extent some fragments of the cognitive consciousness of peoples who speak different languages or to study “cognitive methods of knowledge formation within the media, the flow of communication processes and the role of media in the formation of socially significant contexts” (Konovalova, 2016, p. 87).

When studying the verbal side of FEMINISM conceptualization on the material of Russian and French media texts, the following sense components of the linguo-cognitive phenomenon of FEMINISM were identified.

Sense components of the linguo-cognitive phenomenon of FEMINISM reconstructed on the material of Russian media texts:

1. ‘inferiority’ (harshness, smoking, losers, abnormality, ugly appearance, stupidity, loneliness)
2. ‘economic independence’ (security, living on your own money, employment, careerism, shifting interests, success)
3. ‘freedom’ (emancipation, freedom, independence, self-sufficiency)
4. ‘what leads to death’ (extinction, destruction of traditions, love, tumor, mass experiment)

5. 'conscious motherhood' (refusal to have many children, childlessness, not a mother, not a wife, independent motherhood)
6. 'professional equality' (feminization of professions, economic (professional) equality)
7. 'negative attitude to men' ("amazon" women, revenge on the male sex, contempt for men)
8. 'totalitarianism' (*superiority, censorship*)
9. 'anti-objectification of women' (*protection from sexual violence*)
10. 'equality' (equal relations, equal rights)
11. 'unnecessary phenomenon' (*nonsense*)
12. 'activity' (confidence, independence)
13. 'anti-sexism'
14. 'education'
15. 'struggle'
16. 'best gift for March 8'
17. 'normal word'
18. 'patriarchal society'
19. 'victim complex'

Sense components of the linguo-cognitive phenomenon of FEMINISM reconstructed on the material of French media texts:

1. 'égalité professionnelle femmes-hommes' (femmes dans la Direction de l'entreprise, formations des managers sur l'égalité, rattrapage salarial, absence de barrières géographiques pour poursuivre des études, la féminisation aux entreprises, égalités salariales, l'égalité professionnelle, réduire Les inégalités dans Les carrières, Le Prix des femmes Architectes)
2. 'verbalisation du viol' (harcèlement de rue, la création d'un délit d'outrage sexiste, la possibilité de signaler en ligne un viol, une agression, le cyber harcèlement, les dommages de la pornographie, cells d'écoute, violences obstétricales)
3. 'parité' (partage des tâches parentales, l'égalité des sexes, la PMA à tout le monde, réduire les inégalités dans les foyers, congé paternité prolongé)
4. 'défiance' (être frustrées, malbaisées, hystériques, être aigries, laides, inverties)
5. 'affichage de sa féminité' (porter un short, une jupe, le respect de son corps (2) et de son désir, de sa sexualité)
6. 'affranchissement des normes et des clichés' (la remise en question des rôles genres, détruire le mythe du Prince Charmant, refuser le patriarcat, bousculer l'ordre établi, être contestataire)
7. 'stalinisme' (accusation, ostracisation, condamnation, victimisation, hystérie)
8. 'celle qui n'est pas mère' (*ne pas être mère parfaite*)
9. 'écriture inclusive' (Le Matrimoine, réduire les inégalités de représentation entre hommes et femmes)
10. 'masculinisation des femmes' (*hommages*)
11. 'antisexisme'
12. 'pression de la société'
13. 'courage'

14. 'éducation des garçons'

15. 'liberté'

16. 'célibat'

17. 'accès au pouvoir'

Comparative analysis of the sense components identified on the basis of material of Russian and French media texts revealed common and ethnospecific elements. Common conceptual features 'equality' – 'parité', 'freedom' – 'liberté' - correspond to the original definition of FEMINISM in both French and Russian dictionaries representing its main ideological directions that arise within the framework of a patriarchal society ('patriarchal society' – 'pression de la société'). 'Equality' – 'parité', 'freedom' – 'liberté' as conceptual areas combine similar concepts that allow further cognitive expansion:

Equality: Education, Professional equality, anti-Sexism, anti-Objectification of women.

Freedom: Conscious motherhood.

Parité: Education des garçons, prof Egalité femmes-hommes, Antisexisme, Verbalisation du viol.

Liberté: Celle qui n'est pas mère, Célibat.

The sense component 'verbalisation du viol' indicates sexual crimes and gynecological violence that are openly discussed in French society and at the state level. The analysis of articles in Le Monde newspaper for 2017-2018 shows that 241 texts were published about feminism, and 1/3 of them is devoted to the problem of violence against women (Dekich, 2018). The conceptual feature 'violence against women' is not represented in the Russian media picture of the world, and 'professional equality' is a peripheral feature stating the fact of feminization of many traditionally male professions and the need to implement professional equality.

The sense components 'totalitarianism' – 'stalinisme', 'inferiority' – 'défiance' generalize the negative attitude to FEMINISM describing it as something that destroys, blames, controls. Women who represent FEMINISM stereotypically have a repulsive appearance, low intellectual abilities.

Conceptual features that are not in the position of possible mutual comparison are also formed within the conceptual areas of 'Equality' – 'Parité', 'Freedom' – 'Liberté' and of a positive or negative attitude expression to the phenomenon under study.

Freedom: Economic independence, Activity.

Attitude to the phenomenon: The Best gift for March 8, the normal word, uselessness, victim complex.

Parité: Affranchissement des normes, Ecriture inclusive.

Liberté: Affichage de la féminité, Courage.

Attitude au phénomène: *Masculinisation des femmes*.

In the Russian media picture of the world in comparison with the French one, at this stage, there was no actualization of such cognitive features as 'affichage de sa féminité', 'affranchissement des normes', 'écriture inclusive', 'courage', 'éducation des garçons', 'accès au pouvoir', indicating the resistance of women to the pressure exerted on them by the patriarchal society. In this regard it is possible to talk about a certain "cognitive assimilation of a borrowed word", which manifests itself in the direction of expanding or narrowing its conceptual content (Belyaevskaya, 2019, p. 56; Privalova, 2019, p. 423).

7. Conclusion

The study of a different language picture of the world provides an opportunity to match the new accepted knowledge to the national language picture of the world and to identify its particularities. The fact of mutual comparison of sense components of the linguo-cognitive phenomenon of FEMINISM on the basis of Russian and French media texts show a significant similarity in the understanding of FEMINISM as a fragment of social reality which is expressed in the Russian and French language picture of the world. Since the period of the French revolution the main slogans of French women's protest manifestations have been political equality and emancipation. In Russia women have been actively claiming their rights since the mid-19th century, demanding suffrage, economic independence, the ability to work and have access to education.

However, in spite of the external similarity of the compared language pictures of the world we must take into account different historical, social, and political conditions for the formation of the donor concept and the ways of its assimilation and expansion in the recipient language picture of the world, in particular at the present stage. By means of the language, collective cognitive gaps can be "reproduced" and considered within the framework of the studied concept as its unthought meanings in relation to the cognition of the phenomenon (Tkachenko, 2018). For example, violent psychological and physical practices against women and girls presented in the French media discourse are suppressed in Russian-language mass communication as well as a broader understanding of gender equality. When pointing out Russian and French society patriarchy it is necessary to indicate an active promotion of pseudo-feminist ideas of *a negative attitude to men and the destruction of traditions* especially in the Russian language picture of the world which manipulatively allows to divert attention of the public from really important tasks and decisions regarding the status of women proposed by the philosophy of FEMINISM. Despite the predominance of negative evaluation of feminism in both Russian and French media texts, French media texts also record positive meanings in relation to feminist ideas. Thus, the President of the French Republic at the international level declares the feminist orientation of the country's state policy which puts forward initiatives in the fight against violence, sexism against women, and advocates for the expansion of educational opportunities and women's economic emancipation.

Linguistic research aimed at comparative study of means of cognitive phenomena representation in different world pictures (see more about variants and variations of the language picture of the world: Dziuba, 2015, p. 47, 67) (including national pictures of the world) allows us to see the possibility of a significant expansion of cognitive horizons of speakers of different languages, and in the case of inclusion in the research field of speech works of mass communication - reveals various manipulative practices that are relevant in the modern media discourse.

Acknowledgments

The research is accomplished under financial support of Russian Foundation for Basic Research, project № 19-013-00895 "Learning to Understand Russia: Cognitive Strategies of Teaching Aids in Russian as a Foreign Language".

References

- Babenko, L. G., & Cui, Y. (2019). Lexical-semantic field of Goodness: Common and National-specific, *Philological Class*, 1(55), 58-66.
- Babushkin, A. P., & Sternin, I. A. (2018). *Cognitive linguistics and semasiology*. Voronezh: Rhythm.
- Belyaevskaya, E. G. (2019). Conceptual internal form in the semantics of borrowings. *German, NOVA ET NOVE: Materials of the Second international scientific and practical conference*, pp. 53-56.
- Dekich, E. (2018). Mass communications of aggressive feminism and anti-feminism (based on materials from the French press). *Information age*, 1(2), 266-267.
- Dziuba, E. V. (2015). *Lingo-cognitive categorization of reality in the Russian language consciousness* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from Elibrary.ru
- Feminisme. [Def. 1]. (n.d.). Dictionnaire électronique Larousse (2019). Retrieved from <http://www.larousse.fr/dictionnaires/francais-monolingue>
- Full dictionary of foreign words. (1907). Compiled by M. Popov, Moscow.
- Konovalova, M. V. (2016). *Evocation in the internet media discourse*. (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from Russian state library.
- Krysin, L. P. (2000). Inoiazychnoe slovo v kontekste sovremennoi obschestvennoi zhizni. [A foreign word in the context of modern social life]. *Russkii iazyk kontsa XX stoletia (1985-1995) [The Russian language of the late 20 th century (1985-1995)]*, 142-161.
- Maklakova, E. A., & Sternin, I. A. (2015). *Theoretical problems of seminal semasiology*, Moscow: Direct-Media.
- Nefedova, L. A. (2018). Direct borrowing and tracing as a means of language representation of a borrowed concept (using the example of the phraseological concepts FIRST LADY / FIRST LADY in German and Russian). *Language and culture*, 42, 118-136.
- Ozyumenko, V. I. (2019). Social reality formation in media discourse: information ambiguity strategy. *Bulletin of The Volga, Series 2, Linguistics*, 18(3), 64-75.
- Privalova, I. V. (2019). Conceptual drawing in the contemporary linguistic reality. *IV Philosophical readings, Language in modern discursive practices*, Materials of reports and reports of the International scientific and practical conference, pp. 422-428.
- Rogozina, I. V. (2003). *Media-picture of the world: cognitive-semiotic aspect*. (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from Russian state library.
- Tkachenko, Yu. G. (2018). Cognitive gaps in the consciousness of Modern speakers of Russian and French. *Philological class*, 4(54), 34-40.
- Zabotkina, V. I. (2015). *Methods of cognitive analysis of word semantics: computer-corpus approach*. Moscow: Yaz. slavyan. kultura.