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**FAMILY AND MOTHERHOOD IN RUSSIAN, DANISH, FINNISH  
MEDIA DISCOURSE: LINGUOCULTURAL ASPECT**

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***Abstract***

The present study deals with the range of important and topical issues of modern philology related to the understanding of the sociocultural prerequisites for the formation of national linguistic picture of the world, as well as the image of the human in it. The aim of the paper is to describe the linguistic and sociocultural characteristics of the discourse on family and motherhood based on a comparative analysis of texts from Russian, Danish and Finnish popular socio-political publications. The range of tasks posed in the study touches upon important problems of mankind developing in the context of globalization and intercultural communication and highlights the trends that shape the Russian and European communities. The authors of the present linguoculturological study consider the phenomena of family and motherhood as complex and culturally significant concepts. The relevance of the study is accounted for by its general humanities-oriented focus. Identifying and analysing what is universal and what is special in the content of the key concepts of European cultures, as well as determining of the reasons that cause differences in the semantic content of culturally significant concepts seem to be timely and relevant tasks of present-day linguistic research. The findings of the study showed that a comparative cross-cultural consideration of complex axiological sociocultural phenomena allows us to determine the vectors of the social development of nations and penetrate deeper into the content of these phenomena, gaining insight into their hidden semantic characteristics that are not obvious without comparative study.

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**Keywords:** Discourse, family, motherhood, linguoculturology, concept, comparative analysis.



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## 1. Introduction

According to the definition given in the “Linguistic Encyclopedic Dictionary”: *discourse* (from Old French discours, from Latin discursus ‘running to and fro’ (in medieval Latin ‘argument’) is a coherent text in combination with extralinguistic - pragmatic, sociocultural, psychological and other factors. It is a text viewed in the context of an event as well as speech, considered as a targeted social action, as a component involved in the interaction of people their cognitive processes. Analysis of discourse is always an interdisciplinary study (Garcés-Conejos Blitvich & Bou-Franch, 2019; Jewitt, 2016; Jones, Chik, & Hafner, 2015; Widuna, 2018).

The research material was obtained from online thematic articles published in Russia, Denmark and Finland during the period of 2008-2019. In total, more than 500 articles (Russian Internet publications (or online publications) – “Известия” [Izvestia], “Ведомости” [Vedomosti] and “Российская газета” [Rossiyskaya Gazeta], and Danish Internet publications Berlingske and Avisen.dk were analysed; of the Finnish online publications we analysed Helsingin Sanomat and Iltalehti, published from January 2018 to October 2019. The present paper is the continuation of the authors’ work on studying the concept “family” in the discourse of Russian and foreign mass media (Boguslavskaya & Chafonova, 2019).

The social nature of the discourse as a whole, and even more so the discourse of the media, determined the choice of discourses on the family and motherhood, which are relevant and complex social issues inextricably linked to the global sociocultural context, including digital era of mass media (Ferozi, 2018; Shapiro, 2015; Vaillancourt, 2015).

## 2. Problem Statement

Sociological researcher Monique Kremer points to the departure of modern society from the traditional model of gender roles: “Most European welfare states today have said farewell to the male breadwinner – female caretaker model” (Kremer, 2006). Russian sociologist Pecherskaja (2012, p. 323) raises the acute social problems of the dialogue between the institutes of parenthood and state power and, citing a number of researchers, describes the current situation of the institutes of parenthood and the family as follows: modern transformations of the institutes family and parenthood are inscribed in the global context of the modernization process, which caused not only an increase in production and an increase in the quality of life, but at the same time placed increased demands on the quality and volume of labor resources and the growth of labor activity of both men and women. However, researchers Varlamova, Noskova, and Sedova (2006) in their article present data from the study “Family. Demography. Social Health of the Population” conducted by the Sociological Rating Service of the Russian State Social University, which indicates that the hierarchy of the most important values of Russians is headed by the values of health, family, presence children and mental comfort.

In 2016, the Danish news agency TV 2, based on a survey conducted in Denmark, published a list of ten core values that define Denmark society (Her er den nye Danmarkskanon: Se de 10 værdier, der definerer Danmark 2016). This list included the following values: *open-minded and tolerant attitude and thinking, gender equality, prosperity, trust, Danish language, participation in particular communities and volunteering, special feeling of comfort Christian heritage, freedom and equality before the law*. Many of

these values declare Danish culture as a modern culture, the key terms of which are *tolerance, freedom and equality*.

In February 2018, data on the most important values of Finnish society were published (Kansalle kelpaa työllistyvä maahanmuuttaja, kunhan töitä riittää itselle – turvallisuus on tärkein arvo, 2018). The top ten Finnish social values included *security, benevolence, independence, universality, uniformity, pleasure, traditions, productivity, strength and wealth*. It is important to note that such a value as *security* includes the *health and safety of the family, national security and social order* in general.

### 3. Research Questions

In order to better understand the cognitive features of the actualization of concepts of “family” and “motherhood” in modern media texts, we have compared the data of lexicographic sources. In doing so we have considered those sources that can provide us with relevant information. The study was based on the monolingual dictionaries of three analysed languages (Den danske ordbog. Modern dansk sprog, Suomen kielen sanakirja 2019; Linguistic Encyclopedic Dictionary, 2019).

The main vocabulary meaning of the concept of “family”, according to the Linguistic Encyclopedic Dictionary, is the following definition: *a group of people consisting of a husband, wife, children and other close relatives living together*. The definition of the word allows to distinguish the following components that define the concept of “family”: 1) *this is a group of people*; 2) *consists of a husband, wife, children and other close relatives*; 3) *people who live together*.

The concept of “motherhood” is presented in a lexicographic source with the following meanings: 1. *The state of a woman-mother during pregnancy, childbirth, feeding and raising a child. Protection of motherhood and childhood. Maternity Concerns*. 2. *A feeling for children inherent in a woman-mother, a desire to be a mother. Motherhood awoke in her. Maternity is common to most women. Unsatisfied motherhood*. We can distinguish the following key components that define the concept of “motherhood”: 1) *a woman-mother*; 2) *pregnancy*; 3) *childbirth*; 4) *feeding*; 5) *raising a child*.

The lexicographic description of the concept of “motherhood”, presented in the dictionary of the modern Russian language, also gives a traditional idea of motherhood and highlights the relationship between the concepts of “woman - mother – child”.

The dictionary of modern Danish language provides the following definition of the concept of “family”: *Familie – “gruppe af personer bestående af et forældrepar og deres børn typisk boende samme sted; ofte set i forhold til et enkelt af familiens medlemmer” (a group of people consisting of a pair of parents and their children, usually living in the same place; often considered in relation to one of the family members)*.

Here we see a completely different image of the family than the one presented in the dictionary of the Russian language. An ideal or averaged image of a family in the dictionary of modern Danish is 1) *a group of people*, 2) *consists of a pair of parents and their children*, 3) *usually lives in one place*.

The concept of “motherhood” (*moderskab*) in the dictionary of modern Danish language is defined quite succinctly – *det at sætte børn i verden og være mor (to give birth to a child and be a mother)*. The dictionary provides one example of a sustainable collocation with the word “motherhood” - *frivilligt*

*moderskab* (voluntary motherhood), defined as *kvinders ret til at benytte prævention og derved undgå graviditet* (the right of women to avoid pregnancy).

An analysis of the dictionary definition allows to note that, compared with the definition of “motherhood” presented in the Russian dictionary, the Danish dictionary (2019) reduces the above mentioned trinity of *woman-mother-child* to *mother-child*, and does not indicate processes related to *the birth of a child*, i.e. *pregnancy, feeding, bringing up*.

The definition of “family” as presented in the Finnish dictionary comprises the following: *yhdessä asuvien ihmisten ryhmä, jonka tavallinen, tavallisesti muodostavat kaksi keskenään avio- tai avoliitossa olevaa henkilöä ja heidän lapsensa tai yksinhuoltaja lapsineen tai lapseton pariskunta* (a group of people, usually consisting of two people who are or are not married, as well as their children, or a single parent with children, or a childless couple).

The averaged family image in the Finnish dictionary is made up of the following components of meaning: 1) a group of people; 2) people who live together; 3) two married people and their children; 4) two unmarried people and their children; 5) a single parent with children; 6) a childless couple.

The definition of “motherhood” (*äitiys*) in the dictionary of modern Finnish language – *äitinä olo, äidiksi tulo, äidin suhde lapseensa* (to be a mother, to become a mother, the attitude of mother to child) is similar to that presented in the dictionary of the Danish language. The concentration of meaning occurs around the concept of “mother”, which is decisive.

#### **4. Purpose of the Study**

The aim of the study is a linguistic and cultural analysis of the complex concepts of “family” and “motherhood”, based on a comparative study of the linguistic representation of these concepts in the media texts of various linguistic cultures, i.e. Russian, Danish and Finnish. The selection of articles was based on the occurrence of lexemes denoting ‘family’ (Danish *familie*, Finnish *perhe*) and / or motherhood (Danish *moderskab*, Finnish *äitiys*), taking into account possible morphological changes, as well as their relevance to the thematic focus of the study.

#### **5. Research Methods**

An important feature of the present study is its intercultural focus. In this study the authors combine the discursive approach to the analysis of textual material with the linguoculturological approach, implying the consideration of the text as a cultural phenomenon that reflects the specifics of communication of a particular ethnic group, or linguocultural community. We proceed from the assumption that it is intercultural linguistic studies that allows us to gain insight into the deep national-cultural attitudes in the linguistic material that are not obvious outside the comparative context (Kuvychko, Chafonova, & Boguslavskaya, 2018, p. 136). Addressing cultural differences in the process of analysing discourse and text are referred to as ethnographic methods of analysis that help answer questions about the relationship between culture and language.

## 6. Findings

A review of Russian online publications revealed the following lexemes representing the concept of “family”: *large family, family with children, young family, family support, the whole family, payments to families, family subsidies, large family, multinational family, family circumstances, family values, the future of the family, start a family, Russian families, a rich family, family income, a poor family, an impoverished family, a family dysfunction, a family with one child, a family start-up, a dysfunctional family, an incomplete family, foster family, family problems, family holidays, family hearth.*

There is a definite correlation with the data presented in the lexicographic source. Actualization of the concept of “family” in Russian media occurs through the creation of an image, primarily of the nuclear family, as indicated by such numerous examples of the use of the lexeme “family”, creating the image of a young modern family, such as (*young family, family support, payment to families, family subsidies, the future of the family, start a family* and others). Here are some examples from publications: “*a law now on large families is currently being drafted,*” *Yulia Zimova, deputy chairman of the Committee for the Support of Family, Motherhood and Childhood of Public Chamber of the Russian Federation*” (Large families are not aware of the benefits they are entitled to, 2018), “*President Vladimir Putin took the initiative to provide benefits for large families in his address to the Federal Assembly in February*” (The bill on mortgage compensation for large families was adopted in the second reading, 2019), “*The State Duma adopted in the third reading amendments to the Tax Code, which are aimed at supporting young families*” (The State Duma adopted a law on benefits for large families on property taxes, 2019).

The frequent examples of the use of the lexeme “motherhood” in the analyzed articles were the phrases *motherhood support, motherhood protection, surrogate motherhood, motherhood difficulties, the danger of motherhood, late motherhood.* The discourse on motherhood in the domestic media creates an image of motherhood, which reveals a tendency to disclose through its presentation as an unprotected state of a woman, exposed and even endangering, requiring help and support. The importance of state support for the institution of motherhood is highlighted. For example, “*Nowadays motherhood scares many away precisely because of financial difficulties*” (“Special payments for children: about 60 billion will be required for new payments to families”, 2019), “... *Sergei Shulgin, Deputy Head of the International Laboratory for Demography and Human Capital, RANEP, noted the importance of state support for motherhood for Russians*” (Russian women give birth to second children for the sake of the first, 2018), “*The protection of motherhood and childhood, the support of women in Russia is given special attention, and the attitude towards women in our country ... is touching, sincere, and tender*” (The world will benefit from more female success stories, 2018). The issues of surrogate motherhood stand apart, a topic constantly raised that did not find an unambiguous assessment, but more often considered (in the Russian media) in a negative context: “*In the USA, for example, surrogate motherhood has already become a prosperous business*”, “*The desire to replace the father and mother with some amorphous parents sets the stage for surrogate motherhood*” (Parental rights: France has done away with “father” and “mother, 2019).

A review of Danish online publications revealed the following lexemes representing the concept of “family” (“*familie*”): *nærmeste familie (immediate family), familievirksomhederne (family business), kongefamilien, den royale familie, den kongelige familie (royal family), de danske familier (Danish families), familiemedlemmet (family member), de mest velhavende familier, landets rigeste familier (richest*

families, richest families in the country), *i familie med hinanden* (related to each other), *familie-id* (family identifier), *familieopfattelse* (family relationship), *familie-shaming* (family disgrace), *familieejerskabet* (family property), *de glade familier* (happy family), *at stifte familie* (start a family), *aktive familieliv* (active family life), *dage og aftener med familien* (days and evenings with your family), *kronprinsfamilien* (family of the crown prince), *erhvervsfamilier* (family business or business families), *fattige familier* (poor families, authors' note - about Iraqi families). For example: “*Siden 1935 har Gråsten Slot fungeret som sommerbolig for den danske kongefamilie, hvor dronning Margrethes forældre, kong Frederik IX og dronning Ingrid, overtog brugsretten til slottet*” (Since 1935, the castle of Grosten served as a summer residence for the Danish royal family, when the parents of Queen Margrethe, King Frederick IX and Queen Ingrid, received the right to use this castle) (Her er de royales sommertraditioner, 2018); «*...en stigning i olieprisen på i omegnen af ti procent umiddelbart koster en dansk familie tusind kroner om året*” (This means that an increase in oil prices by about ten percent immediately costs a thousand kroner a year to a Danish family) (Dyrere oliepris kan koste familier 1000 kroner ekstra årligt, 2019).

The examples of the lexical representation of the Danish concept of “familie” found in the study are extremely heterogeneous, which does not allow us to unequivocally distinguish thematic categories or semantic groups that form the image of the family. However, one can trace certain aspects of the actualization of the concept of “familie”, which are most pronounced in Danish publications. For example, a large proportion of lexical combinations with the ‘familie’ dominant indicates the interest of the Danish media and society in the well-being of the family, that is why in Danish publications much attention is paid to the material well-being of Danish families, family business opportunities: *familievirksomhederne* (family business), *de mest velhavende familier*, *landets rigeste familier* (richest families, richest families in the country), *familieejerskabet* (family property), *erhvervsfamilier* (family business or business families). For example: “*Den (Tredoblingen af generationsskifteskatten) er nu også tre gange højere og vil for mange familievirksomheder være umulig at betale*” (It (the triple generation tax) is now also three times higher, and it will be impossible to pay for many family businesses) (Er familievirksomheder uønsket i Danmark?, 2019); “*Varslerne om en øget arvebeskatning har fået mange både store og små familievirksomheder til at frygte fremtiden*” (Inheritance tax announcements have made many large and small family businesses fearful of the future) (Morten Bødskov står fast: Skat på generationsskifte skal lægge en ekstra milliard i statskassen, 2019); “*Han (Lars Larsen) har dog sørget for at planlægge generationsskiftet således, at koncernen ikke må sælges, men skal forblive i familieejerskabet*” (However, he (Lars Larsen) made sure to plan the generational change, so that the group would not be sold, but remained in family ownership) (4. Lars Larsen, Jysk Holding, Jysk, 35,1 mia. kr., 2018).

An analysis of the use of the lexeme *moderskab* (motherhood) in the Danish media allows the authors to come to the following conclusions. More often the media use this concept in isolation, without defining it. For example, when enumerating concepts or in conjunction with another, highlighting a particular issue raised in the text of the article: *moderskab og kærlighed* (motherhood and love), *moderskab og arbejde* (motherhood and work), *moderskab, velgørelse og smukt tøj* (motherhood, charity and nice clothes), *moderskab og ægteskab* (motherhood and marriage), *moderskab og lederskab* (motherhood and leadership). Nevertheless, there are also collocations with the lexeme “motherhood”: *det moderne*

*moderskab (modern motherhood), det selvvalgte moderskab (independently chosen motherhood) and others.*

Examples of the issues raised by the discourse on family and motherhood by the Danish media are found to be consistent with the basic values of Danish society, among which are welfare in the first place, as well as gender equality, which implies gender equality in all social fields. For example: «*kan man jo ikke bare udrense den kunst, hvor kroppen har været i fokus med store temaer som moderskab og kærlighed*» (*one cannot simply clean out art in which the body was in the focus of basic topics such as motherhood and love*) (Nøgenhed? Nej tak! Facebook censurerer kunstmuseer, 2019), “*Moderskab er blevet defineret af mænd i hundredvis af år. En god mor er, hvad mænd synes, en god mor er. I denne film får vi et meget anderledes billede af det at være mor*” (*Motherhood has been determined by men for hundreds of years. A good mother is what men consider a good mother. In this film, we get a completely different picture what it is to be a mother*) (Filmaktuelle Susanne Bier: Mænd har altid dikteret hvad en god mor er, 2018).

It is noteworthy that, unlike the Russian media, the Danish media do not actually address the issue of motherhood support: no material was found related to material/state support of the institute of motherhood.

An analysis of Finnish online publications revealed the following lexemes representing the concept of “family” (“perhe”): *lapsiperhe (family with children), perheasunto (family apartment), koko perhe (whole family), perhe-elämä (family life), Espoolaisen lapsiperheen äiti, lapsiperheen äiti (mother of a family with children from Espoo), perheen koti (family home), lapsiperheköyhyys (poverty of a family with children), perheenjäsen (family member), kolmihenkinen perhe (family of three), lapsiperhe-elämä (family life with children), lapsiperheiden etuuksia (benefits for families with children), iso perhe (large family), perhekerhoja (family clubs), ekoperhe (ecological family), suurperhe (large family, literally an extended family), perhepsykologi (family psychologist).*

The most frequent examples of the lexical representation of the concept of “family” in Finnish publications are *lapsiperhe (family with children), perheasunto (family apartment), koko perhe (whole family), perhe-elämä (family life)*, which allows us to draw conclusions about the priorities given to Finnish news coverage of family issues. One of such priority issues is providing the family with housing (*perheasunto (family apartment), perheen koti (family house)*). In addition, the Finnish online publications increase attention to the number of children in a family - *kolmihenkinen perhe (family of three), iso perhe (large family), suurperhe (large family, literally extended family)*, as well as the quality of life of families with children - *lapsiperheköyhyys (poverty of a family with children), lapsiperheiden etuuksia (benefits for families with children)*. Examples: “*Perheasunnot ovat huonojen yhteyksien päässä*” (*Family homes are hard to get*) (2019); “*Perhe etsii yhä kohtuuhintaista isoa perheasuntoa kantakaupungista, mutta sen saaminen on vaikeaa*” (*Family still looking for a large family home in the city center at a reasonable price, but it is hard to find*) (Hitas-asunto myytiin roimaan ylihintaan Jätkäsaarella – Rakennusyhtiö korjaa virheensä, mutta alkuperäinen ostajaehdokas on yhä ilman uutta kotia, 2018); “*Keskustelu lapsiperheiden köyhyydestä meni väittelyksi maahanmuuttajien kohtelusta*” (*Discussion on poverty of families with children continued further to discuss the treatment of immigrants*) (Espoo pureutuu lapsi-perheiden köyhyyteen kolmen vuoden ohjelmalla, 2019); “*Tutkija korostaa, että lapset tai lapsiperhe-elämä itsessään eivät aiheuta vanhemmille uupumusta*” (*Researcher emphasizes that children or family life alone*

*do not cause parental fatigue*) (1 725 isää ja äitiä vastasi: Näistä syistä perhe-elämä tympii ja ahdistaa, 2019).

The concept of “motherhood” is presented in the Finnish media as follows. The discourse on motherhood emphasises the issue of motherhood in the overwhelming majority of the texts examined from the standpoint of social and state support for motherhood. The most frequent uses of the lexeme *äitiys* (*motherhood* in Finnish) turned out to be a derivative which is formed by the combination of the lexeme *äitiysloma* (*maternity leave*) and the lexeme *äitiyspakkaus* (*package for pregnant women*), as well as *äitiysneuvonta* (*consultation for pregnant women*) and *äitiyspäivärahan* (*pregnancy and childbirth benefits*). The priority issue for the Finnish media, as well as for the Russian ones, was the issue of social security of the institution of motherhood. For example: “*Osmo on koti-isänä ja äitiyslomansa jälkeen töitä aloitteleva Pipsa työskentelee yrittäjänä enimmäkseen kotona*” (*Osmo is the housewife, and Pipsa, who is beginning to work again after maternity leave, works mainly as an entrepreneur at home*) (Näin elää ekoperhe, 2019); “*Äitiyspakkaus vuosien saatossa*” (Helsingin Sanomat, 2018); “*Äitiyspäivärahan uusi laskentatapa on epäreilu*” (*The new method of calculating maternity benefits is unfair*) (2019); “*Äitiyspakkauksen nimeä ei muuteta – Kansalaiset eivät innostuneet ”kaikki perheet huomioivasta” nimenmuutoksesta*» (*No changes in the name of the package for pregnant women – citizens were not enthusiastic about changing its name to ‘for the whole family’*) (2018).

## 7. Conclusion

The analysis led to identifying the following trends in the actualization of the studied concepts. For the Russian media, the most important characteristic is the image of a large, modern, young family. The media actively discusses the issues of material support for such families, as well as support for motherhood. In addition, in the discourse on motherhood, one of the most frequent topics was the topic of surrogate motherhood. Danish publications are characterised by coverage of material wealth of families and family business. The image of the family here is extremely heterogeneous and thus, it is difficult to highlight certain aspects of creating a family image. The issues of family and motherhood in the discourse of the Danish media are consistent with the basic values of modern Danish society, i.e. well-being and gender equality. The Finnish media are actively covering the problems of housing affordability and the life features of families with children; the family image created by Finnish publications is a family with children living in their own home (family home); the issue of motherhood is based on the discourse on social support for the institution of motherhood, which is comparable to the discourse on motherhood of modern Russian socio-political media.

It can be concluded that a comparative analysis of the semantic actualization of the complex concepts of “family” and “motherhood” allows us to detect the essential characteristics of the sociocultural background inherent in modern Russian, Danish and Finnish society in the linguistic features of their representation.



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