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Understanding the Notion “Marriage” in British Lingvoculture (By Means of its Verbalization)

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Abstract

The article deals with the studying the structure of the subconcept «marriage» in modern British lingvoculture. The subconcept is viewed as one of the basic conceptual structural elements of the concepts sphere “family relations”. The study of the language filling is taken by means of lexicographic description of the lexemes possessing the corresponding to the attractors denotational meaning and studying the literature in the aspect of using the connotational meaning to show the peripheric field. When the linguistic study is done then the subconcept is structurised so that the internal structural features could be viewed and then it could be studied on the aspect of reflecting the social changes of the family phenomenon in the society and find out which changes are reflected in the language. The study resulted in the changes of the traditional structure caused by the social changes. These are the lack of traditional ceremonies resulted in the simplifying of the wedlock, appearing multiple marriages, as well as partners instead of spouses.

Keywords: Lingvoculture, Family relations, Marriage, Concept, Language fixation, Social changes.

Introduction

Nowadays there is a large-scale change in society's worldview that is seen in both blurring territorial boundaries due to new economic zones and blurring communication boundaries due to the Internet, the Muslim culture expansion into Europe, broad adoption of alternative social norms such as single mothers and even fathers, large number of divorces, feminization, same-sex marriages and possibility for the partners of such marriages to adopt children. In these conditions, traditional values and living principles such as family and traditional marriage become especially significant even in the context of the new realities.

The essence of marriage is studied in a psycho-social aspect rather than in a linguistic. Foreign scholars study marriage as a part of the family, eg. *Marriage and the family: Diversity and strengths*, by David H. Olson and John DeFrain, 2000, *Engagement and marriage*, by Burgess, E.W. and Wallin, P., 1953, *Marriage and family interaction*, by Bell, R.R., 1967.

This article focuses on analysing the linguistic entrenchment of the subconcept 'marriage' of the sphere 'family relations' in the British lingvoculture and on modeling its mental structure as part of the whole structure of the sphere 'family relations' as an element of the society.

We chose the structure of concept as a basis and changed it a little so that it would arrange the views and conceptualisations of lots of language users rather than choose one of them. We say conceptual structure to denote a mental structure with some special features. The one that we suppose the most relevant to the study of sphere of concepts (as a unity of concepts) is that all of the listed tokens with their system and/or functional meaning are drawn to a concept, meeting the criteria for its identification (objectifying mandatory conceptual features of the concept) (Smirnova, 2014).

The sphere of concepts is a basic mental structure of knowledge which accumulates conceptualisations created by the whole lingvocultural community rather than by one native speaker. According to D.S. Likhachev, the sphere of concepts is "a set of cultural meanings in the nation" (Likhachev, 1993). The sphere of concepts is a complex of semantic, notional and associative features that represent concepts forming the sphere. Hence, some characteristics, as well as some aspects of concept formation, are also relevant for the sphere as a large group of concepts (Prokhorova, Smirnova, 2013). The sphere of concepts, as we see it, has a special cognitive status as a structure with a large scope of conceptualised information, broad field of

meanings (that is, the sphere of concepts 'family relations' consists of a significant number of structural elements) as well as sufficient resources for actualizing the structure. The study of different mental structures allows the scholars to trace the changes of the social sphere by means of their linguistic fixation.

Method

As the methodological basis, we accept traditional linguistic methods of studying the material. Mostly, we base our study on the results of conceptual analysis. Conceptual analysis is considered to be the basic method of concept research. The goal of the conceptual analysis is to trace the way of perceiving the meaning of the concept and record the results in the formalized semantic language. Study of the works of different authors in the field of conceptual analysis shows that it is not a certain kind of method of concepts research. It would be more appropriate to suggest that the corresponding works are related by some relatively common goal, and as to the ways of achieving this goal if they appear to be extremely diverse. According to Frumkina R. M., "different authors have different opinions concerning the set of procedures that should be regarded as conceptual analysis and they disagree in the aspects of the goal as well" (Frumkina, 1989). The standpoint is that the study of separate concept or conceptual field goes through the analysis of the objectified results of the cognitive activity. The methods of the conceptual analysis depend on the understanding and possibility of the concept structurization. There are opposite viewpoints among the linguistics studying concepts structurization (Kacharava).

Main part

We consider concept the most relevant mental structure for forming the sphere and facilitating its most flexible objectivation. Interpreted extensively, the concept is a global mental entity, "an increment of structured knowledge" (Kuprieva, 2014). This broad interpretation of the sphere's mental structure allows it to adjust to the specifics of objectivation, to have invariant configuration of obligatory features, which serve identification and differentiation purposes, to attract additional information that is not associated with its nucleus to periphery triggering evolutionary processes. All the invariant prototypical information forms the concept's nucleus and facilitates its identification. Periphery has a plethora of variative knowledge.

The concept has a great number of objectivation means that are related to it semantically due to their ability to objectivate obligatory conceptual features systemically

and/or functionally. These objectivation means with an evaluative tint of systemic meaning are nuclear. Periphery zone of verbalisation objectivates the concept functionally and is open to new additions.

In view of this, the mental structures described above are the most relevant theoretical constructs for the research into such large fragment of reality as 'family relations' as a whole, and its element 'marriage', in particular.

First and foremost, it seems necessary to define the content of the nucleus through its main focal point represented by the lexeme 'marriage' as the nucleus is formed with the verbalisation means whose meaning is conventional and is easily interpreted by native speakers of the particular lingvoculture. Accordingly, we begin with analysing lexicographical sources to elicit verbalisation means relevant for the mentioned semantic component.

The selection of the lexical means requires detection of the set of criteria which define some phenomenon as marriage, they are boundaries within which items forming the given structure function. Thus, the following definition is found in the dictionary: “marriage - 1a (1) : the state of being united to a person of the opposite sex as husband or wife in a consensual and contractual relationship recognized by law (2) : the state of being united to a person of the same sex in a relationship like that of a traditional marriage <same-sex marriage>; b : the mutual relation of married persons : wedlock : the institution whereby individuals are joined in a marriage; 2: an act of marrying or the rite by which the married status is effected; especially : the wedding ceremony and attendant festivities or formalities; 3: an intimate or close union <the marriage of painting and poetry—J. T. Shawcross> (<http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/marriage>).

Etymological studies show that the lexeme 'marry' can be traced back to Middle English use, it has Anglo-French stem 'marier'. Etymological dictionary gives the following information: «marriage (n.) - c. 1300, "action of marrying, entry into wedlock;" also "state or condition of being husband and wife, matrimony, wedlock;" from Old French mariage "marriage; dowry" (12c.), from Vulgar Latin *maritaticum (11c.), from Latin maritatus, past participle of maritare "to wed, marry, give in marriage" (see marry (v.)). The Vulgar Latin word also is the source of Italian maritaggio, Spanish maridaje. Meaning "a union of a man and woman for life by marriage, a particular matrimonial union" is early 14c. Meanings "the marriage vow, formal declaration or contract by which two join in wedlock;" also "a wedding, celebration of a marriage; the marriage ceremony" are from late 14c. Figurative use (non-

theological) "intimate union, a joining as if by marriage" is from early 15c.» (<http://www.etymonline.com/>).

These data demonstrate deep lingvocultural entrenchment of the given mental structure in the conceptual space of the British English. This mental structure began to form in the British lingvo-culture in the 14th century, according to the etymological dictionary. The study of earlier history of the word shows that the lexeme stems from Latin, which is a sign of its universality as it can also be found slightly altered in Italian and Spanish. It proves that both the superordinate concept 'family' and the concept 'marriage' are deeply entrenched in the British lingvoculture.

The study of the word corpus of the British English shows that the nucleus of the mental structure in question is not formed by one lexeme; it is constructed by the whole lexical-semantic field that includes the following lexemes:

«conjuality – something relating to or characteristic of marriage; relations between marriage partners.» (<http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary>).

«connubiality – something of or relating to the married state; marriage or wedlock.» (<http://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/>).

«match - a marriage union; a prospective partner in marriage.» (<http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary>).

«matrimony - the joining together of a man and woman as husband and wife.»

«wedlock - the state of being married.» (<http://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/>).

It can be seen that the nucleus is formed by the following dominating meaning: voluntary opposite-sex relationship involving two people called husband and wife, which is officially registered or acquires official standing after a special ceremony. The nucleus is heterogeneous, it is a chain of semantically overlapping verbalisation means.

The concept under study is of complex structure that has not only heterogeneous nucleus but heterogeneous near-nuclear layer. The latter is formed by verbalisation means that are key elements for the central structure. These attractors give rise to the branches of conceptual structure, thus forming the periphery.

We accept units «spouses» and «ceremony of marriage/matrimony» as such attractors for the concept «marriage», and it's supposed that the concept's structure is formed of four interconnected structures.

The results of lexicographic analysis of the English language corpus show that the structure formed with the attractor «ceremony of marriage/matrimony» as the center tends to include the following units: monogamy; bigamy, polyandry, polygamy, polygyny;

intermarriage, miscegenation, mixed marriage, remarriage; cohabitation, common-law marriage; civil union, domestic partnership; attachment, commitment, relationship; betrothal, engagement, espousal, hand, pledge, promise, proposal, troth. Such excessive lexical verbalization shows that this part of the social environment is quite stable in its language fixation. So, the nuclear structure is represented excessively in the English language. But the studied conceptual structure is not limited by the nuclear structure. So, let's study the peripheral field.

Mostly, the peripheral field is characterised by a great variety of lexical representation due to the word-building possibilities of the English language, and less to the range of syntactic constructions that influence the meaning. Author's individual verbalization is represented by a great number of neologisms, that are explicable mostly in a special context but still present a great deal of meaning strongly interconnected with the cognitive structure of the subconcept «marriage». Also, processes of acquiring additional (connotative or, in a few cases, denotative) meaning to the standard lexico-semantic field of the word meaning are less presented in the building up the group of the attractor «ceremony of marriage/matrimony». Let's illustrate these with appropriate examples.

An interesting example in terms of the research taken is a neologism «I-do-thing» (Hornby, 73). First of all, this lexical unit was formed by compounding; functional capacity of the unit is the expression, that is, on the one hand, it avoids repetition, on the other, close to the expressive function of such means as synecdoche. If our aim is to analyze the semantic content, in this case, we see that «I do» (the famous "I agree / on") is the point of the wedding ceremony in flash and can fully substitute for the expanded concept of "marriage" in the human mind. This way and form a new lexical unit as the above example, which also becomes representatives «marriage» concept in the English-language picture of the world.

Another example of author representation results from the productivity of English: «Svetlana, a *multiply married* millionaires, would sashay on to the screen draped in a super-label dress plus jewellery worth ten times the average salary...» (Reid, 9). This unit presents the slightly negative connotative meaning apart from the denotative one. That's what we see from the context. This is mostly the productive word building of the English language that gives the carriers of the lingvoculture to feel quite free in finding new ways to express their idea.

Thus, the substructure with the attractor «ceremony of marriage/matrimony» as the center is characterized by the large lexemic field of nuclear layer, and the peripheral layer builds up mostly with the examples of the neologism.

As we see, the social changes fixed in this structure witnesses the loss of the marriage institute as it is, and its obligatory character and responsibilities exactly. It is accepted to live family life without the matrimony or treating it just like any other holiday. The society loses its main base of formation – the need to create, keep and save an official and lawful family.

When studying the attractor «spouses» in the lexicographic aspect we found this field of the verbalization units: one of a married couple, bride, companion, husband, man, mate, partner, roommate, wife, woman, groom, helpmate, better half, consort, associate, partner, accompaniment, companion, concomitant, friend, husband, mate, spouse, wife, domestic partner, beneficiary, cohabitant, companion, housemate, longtime, companion, lover, partner. Thus, we see that the lexicographic study of the cognitive structure with the «spouse» attractor is excessive in description the very different aspects of the state of being a partner of a family, when a marriage is official (spouse, husband and wife), or of a royal family (consort, beneficiary), or unofficial (associate, partner).

But what happens when we turn to the study of an author's layer, that is the peripheral field, is that the cognitive structure with the «spouses» attractor do present mostly the nuclear field. There are very few examples of using the connotation when speaking of the «spouse».

The loss of peripheric field of this structure and the recurrence test of the nuclear units show that the family as a social phenomenon loses its traditional structure. As well as traditional “husband and wife”, the nomination “partner” functions in speech. We suppose, that by means of this unit the less responsibility, as well as the infant attitude to life, are transmitted.

Conclusion

So, the subconcept «marriage» structure formed by the attractors «spouses» and «ceremony of marriage/wedding» are represented by a large variety of lexical units with the maintenance of the denotational meaning, that could be easily observed during the lexicographic analysis. The layer formed by means of the calling in connotational meaning and forming the corpus of individual verbalizers. Thus, the studied subconcept is traditional in the reflection of British lingvoculture.

Nevertheless, the changes found out during the study of the lexicographic and literature material reflect the social changes happening in modern culture. European family loses its traditional stability – marriages become «multiple», and in many cases there's no actual «wedlock» ceremony, so the «previous» spouses become «partners». But, the language is constantly changing so the changes are still to be observed.

Results

This study of the notion “marriage” actual for the modern social relations in Great Britain is done more in the linguistic aspect by viewing the language elements that reflect the social structure of the phenomenon. Thus, the more neutralized elements and the tolerance manifestations appeared in the language that are the features of modern British society. Nevertheless, the study could be continued in the aspect of the social studies, as the language surely reflects the social changed but does not correspond to them immediately.

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