

LINGUISTIC-CULTURAL STRUCTURAL LEXICOGRAPHICAL MODULATION OF THE LEXEME “MARRIAGE” IN BRITISH LINGUISTIC WORLDVIEW

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The article is connected with the problem of dynamics of the British linguistic worldview on the basis of British dictionaries of XVIII – XXI centuries. The analysis of transformation of semantic structure of lexeme marriage is given.

Keywords: lexicography, linguistic culturology, language worldview, semantic structure of the word, lexeme, sememe, seme.

Conference participant

Today’s Linguistic is not considered as a subject with clear boundaries, on the contrary the tendency to widening its research is observed. Such expansionism contributes to emergence of new “binary” studies, strengthening of traditional links between Philosophy and Logic, and also it helps to form new branches of Linguistics. These facts make us agree that modern linguistic researches cannot get substantial results studying only linguistic phenomena [2, 207-2011]. Language anthropocentrism is an indispensable aspect of linguistic studies especially its connection with culture and society, and we should not forget the problem of subjectivity in language which is one way or another related to the problem of world image [4, 64-65].

E. Kubryakova considers linguistic world image as a complex of language means which reflect peculiarities of ethnical world perception, it is a complex of ideas about reality fixed in language units at some certain stage of nation’s development [3, 5]. V. Zhajvoronok specifies that linguistic world image is first of all the result of people’s cognition, fantasies, mental processes, and changing activity [1, 9]. Thus, changes in linguistic world image are inseparable from cognitive activity, society’s life, and simultaneously from the language development of a separate community, after all everything existing in language is presented in culture anyway.

According to O. Selivanova one of the ways to describe linguistic world image is systematic-lexicographic researches of national naive world models [5, 442]. In this case the dynamics of dictionary definitions reflects the evolution of linguistic world image. It should be mentioned here that an explanatory dictionary is one of the important ways of describing the language lexical system and its examples display active processes

in a vocabulary which in turn show ethnocultural changes in society.

It has to be stressed that dictionaries as a code of knowledge acquire important social functions. They are not only educational or scientific means but also they perform an important role in cultural development of a nation, represent the depth of knowledge about the world and the language. It is Lexicography that facilitates familiarization with other cultures, perception and cognition of the world.

It is very important for modern explanatory dictionaries to fill lexical units with general cultural or / and national cultural sense. In this case linguistic-cultural aspect of lexicographical production comes to the fore. Dictionaries become manuals for studying culture and mentality of a certain nation. That’s why in order to investigate the evolution of British linguistic world image this paper applies to lexicographical sources of Britain of XVIII – XXI centuries.

Let’s look at dynamics of the lexical meaning of the word “marriage” in British linguistic world image. The main material for this research were the following dictionaries: *A Dictionary of The English Language in which the Words are deduced from their Originals, explained in their Different Meanings* (1768, 1792), *A Dictionary of The English Language* (1828), *A New English Dictionary on Historical Principles Vol. VI – M – N* (1906), *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Current English* (1919), *Oxford English Dictionary Online*.

The surface investigation of the definitions in the dictionaries shows that the word “marriage” gained new semantic components and lost the existing ones. This may speak about the changes in attitude towards this social institute.

In the first dictionary the analyzed lexeme has only one meaning. The same

meaning is presented in two succeeding dictionaries, and in XX c. we see the widening of meaning and the emergence of new semes. In XVIII – XIX c. marriage was interpreted as a union of a man and a woman for life without any references to some religious or law procedure; then at the beginning of the last century this sememe gets a new seme ‘legal’ (wedlock). Thus, it is possible to say that one of the main features of marriage for the British is its legitimacy and official state, besides being in this relationship a pair gets the status of husband and wife or spouses.

The second position of *A Dictionary of The English Language in which the Words are deduced from their Originals, explained in their Different Meanings* (1792) and in *A Dictionary of The English Language* (1828) is very interesting. Marriage here is treated as a permanent union of a man and a woman, the one that lasts perpetually. Thou this sememe is not presented in others dictionaries but any of the analyzed meanings of the lexeme “marriage” doesn’t point towards its duration or the date of its ending. Probable British people think that matrimony should last for the whole life.

Dictionaries *Словники The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Current English* (1919), *A New English Dictionary on Historical Principles Vol. VI – M – N* (1906) give the definition of analyzed lexeme as the ceremony or procedure by which two persons are made husband and wife. Today we rather use the word «wedding» in this meaning. The loss of this sememe speaks about the narrowing of meaning, and marriage now is considered to be a special state not an executable act.

Some specific features of marriage the British shift onto other things and phenomena. The third position in the dictionaries of XX – XXI c. regards the analyzed lexeme figuratively. The

definition explains marriage as a strong combination of elements. This can be seen in the following examples: *Her music is a marriage of funk, jazz, and hip hop* [10]; *In which of the cases do you consider the marriage of verse and tune to have been most successful? He considered the convenience of making a marriage between those rivers* [6]. In the first two examples we see meaning “harmony of components”, in the second example – «joining two things in one”. In this case the main function of marriage, a link between parts, is carried out. It could be said that the British think about marriage not only as living together and coexisting but also as harmonious and agreeable union. Probably the last sememe of the same dictionaries could be treated similarly. This definition presents the combination of a king and a queen of the same suit in cards. Perhaps the correspondence of husband and wife should be taken into account.

The linguistic-cultural aspect of a dictionary becomes apparent in the forth meaning of *A New English Dictionary on Historical Principles Vol. VI – M – N* (1906). Thou in order to get complete explanation it is necessary to consult another dictionary entry – “*maritage*”.

It is said that lexeme “*marriage*” may be treated as a historical word with the meaning of the right possessed by a feudal superior (in England only by the king) of exacting a fine for the marriage of a vassal; also the profits accruing to the crown or lord from this source. Here the clarification is very important for understanding and translation some historical texts and also for people learning English as a foreign language. Similarly can be viewed the fifth meaning of the same dictionary according to which marriage is an obsolete variant for a dowry (the money or property the wife brings her husband; the portion given with the wife; a present or gift by a man to or for his bride). The change of social order and the historical development make these meanings archaic and not usable. This fact confirms the idea that the language reflects all the alterations in society’s life.

Special attention should be paid to the second explanation in the modern dictionary *Oxford English Dictionary Online*. This definition instead of the traditional perception of marriage (the union of a man and a woman) interpret it as a union between partners of the same sex in some jurisdictions. Indeed

today such marriages are legitimate and officially valid in approximately 13 countries, some countries are now considering the opportunity to legalize them. As we may see the dictionary does not keep aside from important social events, on the contrary, the dictionary entry has a purpose to give the most adequate definition of the lexeme that corresponds to both the state of community development and the language its members use.

To make the picture of British marriage more vivid let’s look also at word combinations given in *A New English Dictionary on Historical Principles Vol. VI – M – N* (1906). In these phrases a hint at the legal procedure of getting married and at some traditions is given. For example, *Marriage Act* (any of the Acts of Parliament regulating marriages), *marriage lines* (a certification of marriage), *marriage articles* (an antenuptial agreement embodying he terms agreed on by the parties with respect to rights of property and succession), *marriage license* (an official permission to marry; in England, a document granted by the ordinary or his surrogate, authorizing a couple to be married by a clergyman of the Church of England without the proclamation of banns), *marriage song* (an

	1768	1792, 1828	NEDHP 1906	1919	ODO 2000s
1	The act of uniting a man and a woman for life	The act of uniting a man and a woman for life	the condition of being a husband or wife; the relation between married persons; spousehood, wedlock	relation between married persons, wedlock	the formal union of a man and a woman, typically as recognized by law, by which they become husband and wife
2		state of perpetual union	entrance into wedlock; the action, or an act, of marrying; the ceremony or procedure by which two persons are made husband and wife; a wedding	act, ceremony of marrying	(in some jurisdictions) a union between partners of the same sex.
3			<i>fig.</i> intimate union	<i>fig.</i> intimate union	a combination or mixture of elements
4			<i>obs. Hist.</i> maritage	(<i>Cards</i>) declaration of king and queen of same suit	
5			<i>obs.</i> dowry		
6			<i>Cards.</i> In certain games, e.g. bezique, the declaration of a king and queen of the same suit		

epithalamium), *marriage favours* (knots of white ribbons or bunches of white flowers, worn at weddings), *marriage bell* (a church bell rung on the occasions of a marriage in token of joy) etc. The word combination *civil marriage* should also be mentioned. This kind of marriage can be performed by an officer of the state, as distinguished from one that is of the nature of a religious ceremony. It becomes noticeable that the definitions of the analyzed lexeme contain also the semes 'church' or 'wedding' in all the dictionaries but the modern one. Therefore, marriage for the British is either the formal union recognized by law or the union blessed by church.

The analysis of the dictionary entries gives the opportunity to make a conclusion that the lexeme "marriage" consists of the following semes: 'union', 'permanent', 'legal', 'spousehood', 'homosexual', 'combination', 'money'. So, marriage for British people is a union of two persons which is not limited in time, conforms to valid law and traditions.

At the first glance it may seem that research of the dynamics of meaning belongs to Lexicography only, and that the content of notions does not depend on dictionary definitions. Having looked at the dictionary as at a code of lexical meanings, a "photo" of people's life in a certain historical epoch, having arranged and compared these "photos" in a chronological order, we see that they reproduce the world-view of a nation, its perception of the world and mentality, that is they form linguistic world image. Words change, acquire new meanings, loose existing ones, they become bearers of senses and traditions; contain knowledge and achievements of humankind.

Since linguistic world image is a dynamic phenomenon, language units that reflect it alternate, transform, often gain new conceptual meanings; as a result lexicosemantical fields of words are getting bigger, and words exist not only as simple nominations but also as culturological units. And this helps to manifest the cumulative function of language; it becomes a mirror of the national culture reflecting its history, development and accomplishments.

Thus, the dynamics of the analyzed lexeme in the context of British linguistic world image shows that its evolution

reflects linguistic-cultural changes, that is to say modifications not only in lexical units but also in the cultural life. The reason for it may be the changes in social life of Britain during the last centuries, certain historical events, world cultural and social movements, and perhaps the most substantial the evolution of people's views and priorities.

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