

## The Role of the Social Vocabulary Research in the Russian Language Teaching Practice (on the Example of Zoomorphic Nominations *Homo Socialis*)

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### ABSTRACT

The relevance of the investigated problem is stipulated by the necessity to solve a problem of multicultural humanitarian education and formation of tolerance of students to unfamiliar culture. The purpose of the article is to research educational potential of metaphorical vocabulary in different languages, such as zoomorphic naming units of a man in his social roles and functions. The leading approach to the study of this problem is a communicatively oriented approach to training highly qualified specialist, the future teacher of Russian as a foreign language or an interpreter. The study produced the following results: the possibility to use ethno-linguistic study of Russian language results is illustrated; a selection of lexical items and phraseologic-zoomorphism, which nominate people on the social roles and functions - that teacher can use in the classroom, is presented; the technique of analysis of the vocabulary in which social seme is located in different zones of the word, is presented; the necessity of the use of research results in the practice of teaching in higher school in order to ensure the formation of socio-cultural and communicative competence of students is substantiated. The results can be applied in the organization of educational process in higher educational institutions. The article may be useful to researchers in the field of pedagogy, to teachers, to post-graduate students, to graduate students and students of the following specialties: Russian as a foreign language, Russian language in the practice of interpretation.

### KEYWORDS

Metaphorical vocabulary, multicultural humanitarian education, zoomorphic naming

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## Introduction

### *The problem description*

In modern linguodidactics linguistic facts, preserving ethnic and cultural information are of a great interest. Semantic and motivational researches of

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thematically close vocabulary of different languages are particularly important in the aspect of future teachers of Russian as a foreign language and interpreters training. They must possess the socio-cultural competence, which involves awareness of identity representations of the world and people. Future professionals need to understand that this is embodied in the uniqueness of the inner form of words, on the one hand, the native language, on the other hand Russian as a foreign language. Introducing students to the peculiarities of another culture, with a different mentality, including through the prism of onomasiological approach to the analysis of the vocabulary of the two languages allows students embarking on the study of Russian language, to avoid culture shock.

Obtaining a degree of a teacher-linguist or interpreter involves the study of subjects such as “Ethnolinguistics”, “Cultural linguistics”, “Cognitive Linguistics”, “Lexicology”, “Onomasiology”, “Dialectology” and others. While mastering these courses, a student comes to understanding the fact, that ethnic identity of the group and its language determine each other in complex interdependencies. Human thought, largely due to national mentality, is objectified in the word and the language acts as a form, so the ethnic colour, specificity outlook of representatives of each nation should be reflected in their own languages. American linguist and anthropologist Edward Sapir (1993), drawing a connection between language and thinking, language and cultural environment, wrote the following: “The language and patterns of our thoughts are inextricably intertwined with one another; in some sense they are one and the same”. And further: “Language differences have always been important symbols of the differences in culture”(Sapir, 1993). In the opinion of Russian researcher A.N. Afanasyev (1994), lexical facts on par with the texts are the key to the study of the spiritual culture of the Slavs, “The main source for the explanation of the mythical representations is language. To use its guidance – is a broad and difficult problem; literary monuments of past centuries, and modern vocabulary in all its variety of local, regional differences must be called for the interrogation”.

Formation of the socio-cultural and communicative competence of the future expert whose specialty is related to the use of native and foreign languages, involves the study of lexical richness of the vocabulary. In particular, the social vocabulary, which represents the stereotypical view of ideas about man, his lifestyle, behavior and role in the system of institutional and non-institutional relations.

Zoomorphism as “metaphorically motivated person names” among other are referred to the anthropocentric naming units of social nature (Lapshina, 2016), which do not simply determine the subject but give its figurative characteristics. “The long history of their functioning in the language allowed them to get more meaning, turning into a kind of mental formation of images - symbols in which a basic understanding of society about the external and internal characteristics of the human (especially the appearance, strength, sexual activity, character, intellectual development and so on) is encoded”(Maslov, 2013).

This article is devoted to the understanding of the didactic potential of zoomorphic naming units in the process of teaching Russian language. Zoomorphism attracts the attention by vivid inner form, interesting etymology

that sheds light on stereotypes about the peculiarities of behavior, lifestyle and appearance of representatives of the society.

### **Literature review**

Interest in zoomorphic vocabulary characterizing the person is reflected in the large number of studies. A number of research (Guketlova, 2009; Krivoshapova, 2007; Malafeeva, 1989; Ogdonova, 2000; Sharova, 2010) and articles (Lapshina, 2016; Leontyeva, 2014; Maslov, 2013; Shchetinina, 2016, etc.) is devoted to semantic analysis of zoomorphic naming units in the Russian language, the study of their motivational potential.

A number of scientific papers (Vatletsov, 2001; Galimova, 2004; Solntseva, 2004; Urakova & Altanavdar, 2015; Ustuner, 2004; Fayzullina, 2016; Hueymin, 2009; Shevtchyk, 2011 and others) are devoted to the study of zoomorphism features in different languages in comparative aspect.

Didactic potential of zoomorphic vocabulary is considered in research (Kochnova, 2005; Lavrova, 2008; Chibisova & Busarova, 2013).

All the studies, combined with problems of linguistics, show that the closest relationship between language and culture is realized at the level of vocabulary and phraseology. On the other hand, the names of things are the easiest for understanding in comparative manner. Therefore, the study of lexical and phraseological units, including zoomorphic ones, allows us to accumulate and describe information about people's culture, peculiarities of its life, social order. It is it which is used in the first place as linguistic cross-cultural information on training sessions for those preparing to become language teachers or interpreters.

### **Methods**

#### ***Research methods***

During the research the following methods were used: analysis of lexical material was carried out using the methods of semantic-motivational reconstruction techniques ideographic, component, etymological analysis, linguistic statistics, text experiment, interpretation of contextual semantics, definitions analysis. We used the methods of comparative (contrastive) analysis, systematization and typology, generalization of information about the features of the lexical representation of social and other human qualities; also we used the method to study the experience of teaching the Russian language in linguistic cross-cultural aspect.

#### ***Experimental research base***

Russian State Vocational Pedagogical University is the experimental base of our research.

#### ***Investigation stages***

The problem study was conducted in two stages. At the first stage, the analysis of the social vocabulary, including zoomorphic was carried out. We proposed the substantiation for the zoomorphism inclusion in the circle of social vocabulary, important from the point of view of use in the educational process. The key concepts of the study were identified. At the second stage, the

importance of studying the social vocabulary, including zoomorphic, on the Russian language classes was substantiated.

## Results

The zoomorphic metaphorical naming units of a man, selected from the modern explanatory, idiomatic dictionaries, dictionaries of slang, as well as from the texts created in the framework of the literary and artistic and newspaper discourses served as the material for the study. Analysis of the functioning of the lexical items in different strata of language and discourses allows Russian language students to see the changes in the semantics of words and clarify their modern meaning, currently important for the representatives of the society. In this paper we do not consider dialectal discourse, as in the traditional peasant society the system of institutional and non-institutional relations has its own specifics because of the nature of lifestyle and requires a separate study (Gromyko, 1991; Yeremina, 2003; Leontyeva, 2013).

As a result of the study of semantics and zoomorphic lexical items and phraseological units, to name a man, we have identified a group of language units, in which the meanings of social semes are represented in different zones: assertive and presuppositional. Under social semes we mean such semes that make apparent affiliation of the nominated object, its properties or activities to the field of institutional communication ('expert', 'official', 'employee', 'power', 'organization' and so on). At the same time, we consider that semantic factors that reflect the social qualities of the person, may be present not only in the assertive meaning area, but in presuppositional, though mostly on the periphery of the meaning (Krysin, 1988). In the course of studying Russian vocabulary and functioning of lexical items in the speech, this information is usually omitted. However, for the understanding of the texts, including journalistic, reflecting the current information for the modern society, it is important to understand not only the obvious but also hidden meanings. And they can be located at the periphery of the meaning. In accordance with this provision, we allocate several groups of linguistic units, which meanings contain a social component in nuclear and peripheral areas, within the lexical-semantic group "Zoomorphic nominating units *homosocialis*". Identification of this component is the main task in the development of lexical material in Russian as a foreign language and studied with the purpose of interpretation classes.

### ***Zoomorphic naming units with a social component in assertive meaning area***

First of all, the study of the social vocabulary, presented with zoomorphic naming units should start with an analysis of lexical items and phraseological units that have a social component in the assertive area meaning. They represent:

— first, the professional activity, occupation, for example, *gorilla* (colloquial about businessman bodyguard, some pop stars, mobsters); *sea wolf* (about an old, experienced seaman); *office plankton* (offices staff, clerks); *lame duck* (Jarg. Politician, starting in the second half of his electoral term, and therefore does not have the influence of the past and not taking serious political decisions);

— secondly, the social status; way of life associated with a certain social role: *important bird* (man occupying a high official or public position, who has

power, authority, greater influence); *socialite* (famous, popular person, woman, girl, mingling in a high society, feels confident in a high society); *social lion* (obsolete and ironic about the man, a trendsetter and the rules of social behavior, is very popular with women);

— thirdly, a social assessment of professional qualities of the person or his social role: *bison* (colloq. Jocular, about large, valuable specialist); *rat* (colloq., neglect. About the man, whose occupation is regarded as something trivial, insignificant); *archival rat* (colloq. Scornful. Archive employee; employee, worked for many years in the archive); *shark* (Figur. venal businessman, predatory making use of the labor and property of others, exploiter).

It is interesting to show students that the last word is a component of synonymous phraseological units *capitalist sharks* and *business sharks* in the specified meaning. In recent years, it can often be supplemented by semantic components ‘oligarch’, ‘rich man gained wealth by fraud’, which is derived from the meanings of given phraseological units in contexts (compare examples of the use of phraseological units in texts of the media - magazines, newspapers: (1) *Tell me, exactly how **capitalist sharks** infringe on the rights of hard workers* (2) *If the greedy **capitalist sharks** seize power - they will stifle every culture and democracy, as their goal is profit* (hereinafter examples of the Russian press from the Russian National Corpus ). It is worth to note that examples of journalism are always vivid and memorable, well-accepted by inofon students, and helping them to better understand other cultures.

Contemplated combinations may not contain valuation seme, that is, be used as a category of persons or companies engaged in business: (1) *“**Business sharks**” - a new reality show about young and ambitious entrepreneurs*; (2) *Principles of Corporate Social Responsibility are professed not only by **business sharks** but also by small businesses*. Furthermore, the word *shark* is a part of phraseologism *sharks of pen (wordsmith)*, emerged as the title of the program “Sharks of pen”, one of the first on Russian television in a talk show format. Its participants, journalists asked tricky questions to the guest stars, provoking them to frank confessions and even scandals. Currently phraseologism *sharks of pen* is used in the meaning ‘journalist’ (*Not only servants of the regime, but also notable fighters with it, as well as **sharks of pen** - everyone loves a vacation*), and ‘journalist, writing on acute scandalous topics’ (*He thinks that **sharks of pen** would be able to protect against violence on the part of the offended heroes of scandalous publications only using military weapons*).

Thus, the first group of zoomorphic naming units for man as *homosocialis* has semes: ‘power’, ‘occupation’, ‘social position’, ‘position’, ‘employee’, ‘agent’, ‘official’, ‘influential’, ‘no influential’, and so on, in its meanings (in assertive area) - actualizing relationships predominantly of institutional type. Naming units of such type belong to the category of so-called “cultural vocabulary” and represent the culture of the book, which should be introduced to students studying Russian or intending to teach Russian to foreigners.

### **Zoomorphic naming units with a social component in the semantic presuppositions**

We include words and phraselogsms, the understanding of which causes difficulties in learning Russian language, to the second subgroup. Social semes in the meanings of these words are not realized in the assertive area, but in

semantic presuppositions (in the periphery, in the background of cultural knowledge area). These lexical items can represent man as *homosocialis*, as well as make actual different characteristics of the human person: *homopsychologicus*, *homointellectus*, *homobiologicus* and others. Between metaphorical naming units, which have social connotations on the periphery of the value, it is difficult to determine paradigmatic relations synonyms / antonyms, which are easily found in nouns and adjectives in literal sense, see this: A.V. Shchetinina (2016).

Some easy for understanding naming units make exceptions, for example, those reflecting chronotypes of a man: *lark* / *owl* (*lark* is a man whose period of activity is in the morning, this type of person; *owl* is a person whose period of activity is at night, this type of person). These words have been used in the Russian language from the second half of the twentieth century, however, they were presented not in every definition dictionary. There is another chronotype of a man – a *pigeon* (Intermediate type of mental organization of a man: self-awakening in the morning, a little later than “larks”, activity during the day is constant, without noticeable peaks and falls, goes to bed an hour and a half before midnight). You can tell the students that this word is not recorded in any definition dictionary, but it exists in the Russian language. On the one hand, the meaning of the words in the assertive area contains components that characterize a man as *homobiologicus*, on the other hand - this biological characteristics can directly affect human social activity of a man, in particular, his performing job functions, that emerges from the context: (1) — *I am an “owl” ... That is, of course, if you want badly, I can get up early in the morning, go to work, go somewhere ... But still the body will wake up only somewhere at 12. Cup of coffee is essential; (2) Valery Karpin noticed at times this season that he could not “wake up” the team before coming on the field. In this connection it is interesting to know - are you an owl or a lark? - Actually I do not like to go to bed early, but I never break regime. Some players like to sleep before the game even in the middle of the day. I do not get it - I like to stay awake during the day, tune in to the game mentally.* Such contexts show that people will emphasize the importance of its chronotype to perform a specific activity. Ethnolinguistic information of this kind is useful for students to understand themselves and others, to establish a contact, to tell about yourself when meeting new people.

Thus, for human zoomorphic naming units inclusion criteria to this group is the ability to almost equally make actual both social and psychological, intellectual, and other characteristics of the person, as well as the presence of a social component in the presumption. According to the criteria, we include the following units in the second group, for example:

- *a white crow* is about a man, distinguished among others, unlike the others: (1) Among her colleagues Tatyana Georgievna is a “**white crow**”; (2) Has a feeling **a white crow** gone with the years ?;

- *lost sheep* is about a man got off his circle of society, the family, having lost the right way of life: (1) *It is impossible to gather twenty-five professionals, as well with a perfect character. But when you know that you have decent leaders in the team, you don't need to worry: some **lost sheep** would not dictate its conditions; (2) Preaching the “**lost sheep**”, he noticed a young girl, keeping an eye on him;*

We can include words and phrases in this group, in which meanings social semes are fixed only in slang dictionaries, although in the literary and newspaper context, they are widely used for *homosocialis* naming units. This is an opportunity to demonstrate language differentiation, namely the presence of jargons, to students introduced into the Russian language and culture. To pass it over in silence would mean to break the logic of research and thus miss the opportunity to form communicative competence of students. For example, the word *bull* in lexicographical sources in the meaning relating to the person (only in several dictionaries), is presented as 'a large, fit, strong (usually stubborn) man', 'racketeer, raider', 'the so-called new Russian'. The analysis of literary (mainly in the detective genre) and the newspaper discourse shows that the word *bull* from the beginning of the 90s is often used to mean 'a bandit, having a distinctive appearance: fit, pumped up, strong, usually with a gold chain around his neck', 'fighter of the criminal structure'.

Moreover, in modern American films (very popular in Russia) superheroes are actively popularized, acquiring in certain situations the appearance of animals (falcon, black panther, Rocket Raccoon, wolverine). Some words are formed by adding the word producing the first component of a *man* or a *woman*, for example, *Spiderman*, *Ant-Man*, *Wasp-Woman*, *Catwoman*. In the newspaper discourse, these words can be used not only as a naming units of superheroes, but also as characteristic of ordinary people, such as: (2) *You are not a bear hunter - you are a Spiderman* (2) *What kind of a Catwoman are you? Find your temperament. Do you agree that in the soul of every woman lives ...a cat?* Due to the presence in the meaning of such words connotations associated with the social role, we believe, can possibly be included into their lexical-semantic group "Zoomorphic naming units *homosocialis*".

Thus, the second group is represented by the words and phraseological units that implement social semantics in the close periphery of the meaning, along with other characteristics of a person, in this case it is interesting that most of the words have negative connotations, such as *bull*, *goose*, *animal*, *predator*, and others. Human sociality is implemented (1) in relation to other people and from other people to the person, that is transmitted by semes 'be distinguished', 'among others', 'bad intentions', 'unlike others', and so on; (2) in fulfilling certain social role that is transmitted by semes 'fraud', 'superhero', 'fighter', 'criminal structure', 'cash in on', 'at the expense of others', 'robbery', 'exploitation of somebody', 'parasitic way of life', and so on.; (3) in a person's ability to have his own opinion, to be independent, that is transmitted by semes 'repeat', 'change', 'other peoples ideas', 'opinion' and so on. Of course, in the educational process semes discussion with the students is very difficult. We present information about semes for professionals who would like to have an idea about the social vocabulary and its heterogeneity and competently select lexical material for classes. For students within classes this information is unnecessary.

### **Zoomorphic naming units with social semantics in the pragmatic presuppositions**

The third subgroup combines nouns which meanings make social semantics actual only in pragmatic presuppositions. This vocabulary is the most difficult for understanding the meaning in the study of Russian as a foreign language

and in the practice of translation These are the words, social connotation in the values of which appears depending on the situation, so it is represented neither in any definitions dictionary nor in dictionaries illustrative material, as well as rarely realized in contexts. For example, a noun *deer* can act as a slang designation of a person of a certain profession, but in this sense it is not known to each native Russian language speaker: **Deer** is a top manager.

Naming units of most zoomorphic nouns are made actual by the features that characterize human intelligence (*sheep, donkey, and others.*), traits of character (*sloth, a mouse, a peacock, and others.*), external features (*wild boar, elephant, belly-worm, giraffe, and others.*), attitude to him of other people, mostly negative (comp. swearing words *goat, dog, sheep, and others.*), i.e. symptoms not related to the social role of the person or other features, manifested in the sphere of institutional relations.

### Discussions

Comprehensive study of language in its association with the culture of the people is beyond any doubt. The study becomes more important at the moment when the Russian education system has embarked on the path of the Bologna process (Davydova et al., 2016), and appeal to the study of other languages and cultures has become an integral part of vocational training (Evtuygina, Simonova & Fedorenko, 2016). Linguoculturological studies, including comparisons aspect of languages indicate that the communication process of teaches in different cultures can arise difficulties. Thus, the Chinese researcher H. Hueymin (2009) considering zoonimic naming units as part of phraseology in Russian and Chinese, notes that there are problems in understanding the process of communication of Russian and Chinese. “One of the ways to overcome these difficulties can become a practical mastery of phraseological material of both languages” (Hueymin, 2009).

Considering the use of animalistic vocabulary at Russian as a foreign language classes, O.V. Lavrova (2008) stated: “Animalistic vocabulary with regional studies component in a number of diverse components of cultural linguistics occupies a significant place. At the same time, the aspect of intercultural communication, studies of linguistic units of lexical-semantic group *Animals* is one of the important areas of linguistic research aimed at understanding these units as a national cultural markers”.

### Conclusion

Educational potential of the metaphorical language is obvious. This article presents a selection of lexical items and phraseological units that a teacher can use in the classroom. Materials used for the training of future teachers of Russian as a foreign or non-native language, and for the future experts in the field of interpreting.

Zonyms semantic derivatives were analyzed, that is, words which primary meaning is the animal designation. They are also used as names of a man by his social roles and functions. The proposed method of analysis of metaphorical language in terms of localization of these things in the social seme of the words will enable teachers to carry out the selection of the correct vocabulary for the lessons.

Core of the zoomorphism group naming a man as *homosocialis*, make up words and phraseological units with social seme in meaning assertive area (*gorilla, sea wolf*, and others.). Close periphery group includes lexical and phraseological units, in which the meanings of social semantics is implemented in semantic presuppositions. Social sema in meanings of such words can be implemented:

- in the close periphery of the meaning and contexts (*white crow, animal, predator*, etc.);
- in the close periphery of the meaning, but it may be absent in the present context (*worm*);
- in contexts, but it may be absent in the meaning - as part of the basic and differential semes (*owl, bird, dove*).

Most of the researched zoomorphic naming units have negative connotations, which confirms the observations of other researchers of zoomorphic naming units: “When man perceives the zoomorphic world representatives of the animal world often serve as a reference carrier of negative traits of human nature”(Guketlova, 2009).

Besides, a number of relatively new, but actual words are not recorded in the dictionary (for example, the names of superheroes: Spiderman, Catwoman, etc.), although they are widely used in newspaper discourse not only for the naming units of American superhero, but also as characteristic of ordinary people.

This article presents part of the lexical-semantic zoomorphism group naming man from the point of view of social characteristics, in order to develop methods of analysis of the social vocabulary in students and adequate perception of texts, containing social and cultural information. It can be supplemented with nouns and phraseological combinations of different linguistic strata, including the dialect, jargons and other discourses. In addition, it is interesting to analyze the social zoomorphic naming units of a man in the aspect of diachronic and contemporary language use.

The description of zoomorphic vocabulary and phraseology in terms of social semantics facilitates the identification of the naming units, the most significant in terms of institutional relations, as well as solving the problem of studying these naming units at classes of Russian as a foreign language and used in the practice of interpretation.

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