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Representation of the linguistic and cultural concept “lie” in the French and Russian language picture of the world

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Abstract

The aim of this article is to establish similarities and differences in the representation of the linguistic and cultural concept “Lie” in the French and Russian language picture of the world. As a result of the research, the authors came to the following conclusions. A comparative analysis of the semantics of the lexemes representing the concept “Lie” in the French and Russian languages showed more similarities than differences, which confirm the long-term relationship of these languages, as well as the similarity of linguistic pictures of the world and the culture of the people.

Key words: linguocultural concept, language picture of the world, lie, culture, comparative analysis.

Representación del concepto lingüístico y cultural "mentira" en la imagen del mundo en lengua francesa y rusa

Resumen

El objetivo de este artículo es establecer similitudes y diferencias en la representación del concepto lingüístico y cultural "Lie" en la imagen del mundo en lengua francesa y rusa. Como resultado de la investigación, los autores llegaron a las siguientes conclusiones. Un análisis comparativo de la semántica de los lexemas que representa el concepto "Lie" en las lenguas francesa y rusa mostró más similitudes que diferencias, lo que confirma la relación a largo plazo de estas lenguas, así como la similitud de las imágenes lingüísticas del mundo y la cultura de las personas.

Palabras clave: concepto linguocultural, imagen del lenguaje del mundo, mentira, cultura, análisis comparativo.

1. INTRODUCTION

In modern and national linguistics scientific interest to the research of vocabulary from different positions does not fade away (Babcock, 2015; Gonzalez et al., 2017; Hajiyeva, 2015; Leontyeva, 2015; Spisiakova, 2016; Petrenko, 2008; Durygina&Artemyeva, 2017), but a special place is occupied by the linguoculturological approach (Tarasova, 2012; Tolstikova, 2012; Arzhanovskaya et al., 2017; Birova, 2013; Cukan et al., 2014; Shatilova, 2011; Mingalieva&Nigmatullina,

2017). Studies on different concepts in a comparative aspect of the material of several languages also remain relevant. The concept “Lie/Deception” is considered, as a rule, with the opposite category “Truth/Lie” Spisiakova (2016) in different languages, however, this concept has not been independently considered on the material of the French and Russian languages, the synonymic series of nuclear lexemes “Lie/Mensonge” and their comparative characteristics are also poorly studied, which determines the relevance of this work. The proposed scientific novelty is an attempt for the first time to study the semantic content of the concept “Lie” in the French and Russian language picture of the world, in the systematization of the composition of the synonymic series of the dominant lexeme, taking into account the similarities and differences in the semantics of the lexemes forming this concept in the languages being compared. The object is lexemes representing the concept “Lie” in French and Russian. The subject of the research is the semantics of these lexemes that make up the designated concept. The aim of this article is to establish similarities and differences in the representation of the linguistic and cultural concept “Lie” in the French and Russian language picture of the world.

2. METHODOLOGY

In the course of the research, the following methods were used: the method of semantic analysis, contrastive and comparative methods,

the method of component analysis of lexical units acting as nuclear lexemes of representation of this concept in each language. The material for the research was the data of explanatory, bilingual dictionaries and synonym dictionaries of the French and Russian languages.

3. RESULTS AND CONSIDERATION

3.1. The notion of “Lies/Deception” in French and Russian

Traditionally, in the Russian consciousness, a lie is understood as a deliberate distortion of reality, as told untruth, as the realization of the intention to mislead. From this, we can conclude that lie is understood as a synonym of deception. The Lie is a statement designed to deceive a speaker when he conceals or distorts, misrepresents what he knows about the state of things under consideration, or when he knows something completely different than what he is saying. From an ethical point of view, the lie is condemned if the deception is caused by the desire to harm another person or to gain an advantage for themselves over another. Whatever it may look like, the lie can only be appreciated only out of politeness or pity. A lot of lies arise in the questions: the questioner perceives the question as a compulsion to answer (corresponding to the truth), which he seeks to avoid with the help of lies (proverb: “Do not ask me, then I will not need to lie to you”), which is why a respected person does not need to ask any questions; most often, complete silence is not effective, as it leaves too much expanse for speculation and does not prevent misfortune. In such situations, it is necessary, as the case may be or in good conscience, to

distinguish what is the highest ethical value — truthfulness or falsehood. In the Russian language lie is used as follows: to wallow in lies, the sea of lies; to expose the lie; lies can be shameful, outrageous, brazen, nefarious, as well as innocent and white. The compatibility of a noun with epithets can indicate to us that lie is something reprehensible, negative and punishable. But in contrast, lies can be for good, justifiable, and saving. The division of the concept of the lie into positive and negative, as we think, is connected with the motive, which is guided by a man: if he lies to himself for the benefit – here lie is negative, if for the benefit to another – his act can be justified.

In the minds of people, the lie is presented as something liquid, which is negative. For example, the lie is often represented in the form of a certain swamp in which you can get bogged down. Nebula, turbidity, opacity in both air and water symbolize the impurity of the narrative, impure thoughts, behind which there is a temptation or something evil. Also, the lie is understood as dirt, in which you can get dirty, tarnish yourself and your reputation. Dirt – this is the image, which is associated with blackness, darkness and evil. Deception in the Russian language is understood as a conscious delusion, expressed untruth, associated with evil intent and evil will of the person. Although not only person as an animate being can deceive, the inanimate as, for example, weather, signs, horoscope. V. Dal’ gives the following synonyms for the word deception as cunning, slyness, duplicity, that is, treats deception as a certain behavioral line that is negatively valued by morality. The word deception is used in the Russian language combinations: obvious, shameless deception, to

commit, to detect, and to expose the deception. These combinations show both a negative assessment by morality, and the transfer of this assessment to the performed action. The French word *mensonge*, apparently, was borrowed from national Latin (*mentionica*) which in turn came from Late Latin (*mentio* – deception). Since the 13th century, it meant “a statement made for the purpose of deception”, a little later it had a more general meaning – “an act of lies”. In the modern language there are still some echoes of some classification: *mensongejoyeux* – “lie as a joke”, *mensongeofficieux* – unofficial “lie”, *le pieuxmensonge* – “lie as a salvation”, *mensongepernicieux* – “malicious lie” (Cnrtl). In modern French, several meanings of the word *mensonge* are distinguished:

- 1) Statement contrary to the truth at the will of the author, uttered for the purpose of deception;
- 2) The act of lying, making a fake;
- 3) The illusion of art;
- 4) What is deceptive, an illusion (Cnrtl).

In French the lexeme *mensonge* has the following compatibility: *tissu de mensonge*, *prendre qn en mensonge*, *vivre dans le mensonge*, *mensongegros*, *mensongenait*. From these examples we can conclude that the French associate lies with fabric, although in the Russian language there is a similar analogy: “Sewn with white threads”, bearing in mind that the deception is too well visible. Deception is also associated with food, which is rather a universal association in languages. In Russian, there are expressions: “He feeds me breakfast” or “Fed up”.

3.2. Comparative characteristics of synonymous series of French and Russian nuclear lexemes “Lie/Mensonge”

Synonymous series of the concept “Lie” in French and Russian can be presented in the following table:

Table1. “Lie” in the French and Russian languages

Russian	French
Lozh/Lie	Mensonge
Obman/Deception	Contreverite
Nepravda/Untruth	Craque
Vydumka/Fiction	Faussete
Zabluzhdenie/Delusion	Menterie
Skazka/Fairy tale	Vanite
Vranye/Nonsense	Invention
Vraki/Bull	Feinte
Kleveta/Slander	Antiphrase
Vymysel/Figment	Bourragedecrane
Zhulnichestvo/Scam	Conte (fable)
Netochnost’/Inaccuracy	Imagination
Ulovka/Gimmick	Mystification
Khitrost’/Cunning	
Tryuk/Trick	
Moshennichestvo/Fraud	
Naduvatelstvo/Swindle	
Lukavstvo/Slyness	
Poddelka/Fake	
Podlog/Forgery	
Shutka/Joke	
Chastushki/Ditties	
Falsh’/Falsehood	
Dezinformatsiya/Misinformation	
Sochinitel’stvo/Inventing	
Izмышlenie/Fabrication	
Ochernenie/Denigretion	
Krivda/Drool	
Mnimost’/Ostensibility	
Lganye/Lying	
Namerennoeiskazhenieistiny/Intentional distortion of the truth	

For further comparative and contrastive analysis of synonymic series of the nuclear lexemes “Lie/Mensonge” it is necessary to determine the composition of meanings presented in these synonyms. The linguocultural concept “Lie” in both French and Russian is expressed by such concepts as “deception”, “fiction”, “cunning”, “fraud” (compare table 2).

Table 2. Semantic representation of the concept “Lie” in French and Russian

French		Russian
	Obman/Deception/Tromperie Vymysel/Fiction/Invention Khitrost'/Cunning/Malice Moshennichestvo/Fraud/Esroquerie	

Let us analyze each of these groups in more detail to identify similarities and differences in the semantics of the lexemes representing these concepts. The following synonymous pairs represent the meaning of “Deception” in both Russian and French: Obman/Deception/Tromperie, Nepravda/Untruth/Counterite, Vrane/Nonsense/Menterie, Kleveta/Slander/Imposture (compare table 3).

Table 3. “Deception” in French and Russian

French		Russian
	Obman/Deception/Tromperie /Untruth/Counterite Kleveta/Slander/Imposture Vrane/Nonsense/Menterie	Falsh'/Falsehood Krivda/Drool Dezinformatsiya/Misinformation Zabluzhdenie/Delusion

To clarify the nature of the similarity of these pairs, let us turn to their etymological characteristics. The lexeme “Obman/Deception” has the meaning of “words, acts, actions intentionally or

unintentionally misleading others” and goes back to the proto-Slavic *manqti* “make a sign by hand” (Online dictionaries). The etymological dictionary of the Russian language by Max Fasmer), whereas in French *Tromperie* means “to make a mistake deliberately” and is derived from *se moquer* – “to make fun of someone” (Cnrtl). Therefore, the compared synonyms are not etymologically related words, but between them there is an initial meaning “to perform intentionally incorrect action”. “*Nepravda/Untruth*” in the Russian language means “that which is not true”, and is formed with the prefix *ne+pravda/un-+truth* and goes back to proto-Slavic *pravъda* – “law, right” (Online dictionaries). The etymological dictionary of the Russian language by Max Fasmer), and in the French language “*Contreverite*” is “a statement opposite to the truth” and is formed from the word *contreverite* (see *verite*) (Cnrtl). Thus, in this pair, the similarity is manifested only in the modern sense of “not true”. “*Kleveta/Slander*” in Russian means “knowingly false defamatory information or dissemination of knowingly false information discrediting the honor and dignity of another person or undermining his reputation” and goes back to an unspecified form, while in French “*Imposture*” means “lie, deception” and is formed from the Latin *imposteur* – “impostor” (Cnrtl). This synonymous pair is also unable to detect the etymological similarities between them. The Russian lexeme “*Vranye/Nonsense*” means “lie, fiction, figment, nonsense, and untruth” and is derived from *врѣти* “to talk nonsense” (Online dictionaries). The etymological dictionary of the Russian language by Max Fasmer), and the French “*Menterie*” has the meaning of “to assert such a truth that may be incorrect”, goes back to the Latin *mentire* “not to tell the truth, to make mistakes; to

promise false; to disappoint” (Cnrtl). Thus, the etymological analysis of the synonymous pair “Vranye/Nonsense/Menterie” showed the similarity in the meaning of “telling lies”. It should be noted that the distinctive feature of the Russian language when comparing the synonymous series of the nuclear lexeme “Deception” is the presence of such lexemes as Falsh’/Falsehood (insincerity, pretension), Krivda/Drool (untruth), Dezinformatsiya/Misinformation (knowingly false information), Zabluzhdenie/Delusion (erroneous opinion), Vraki/Bull (nonsense, poppycock, verbiage). Synonyms of the nuclear lexemes “Lie/Mensonge” in both the compared languages express such a thing as “Fiction”, which is represented by the following synonymous pairs: “Vymysel/Vydumka/Invention”, “Vobrazhenie/Imagination”, “Skazka (Fairy Tale), Basnya (Fable)/Conte”, “Mistifikatsiya (Hoax) /Mystification” (compare table 4).

Table 4. “Fiction” in French and Russian

French		Russian
	Vymysel/Vydumka/Invention Skazka (Fairy tale)/Conte Basnya/Fable Vobrazhenie/Imagination Mistifikatsiya (Hoax) /Mystification	Chastushki/Ditties Sochinitel’stvo/Inventing Izmyshlenie/Fabrication

To identify the nature of the similarities between these pairs, it is necessary to refer to the etymology of these lexemes. The Russian word “Vymysel/Fiction” means “something that is created by imagination, fantasy; figment, lie” and is formed from the old Slavonic mysl’/thought (Online dictionaries). The etymological dictionary of the Russian language by Max Fasmer). “Vydumka/Figment” comes from

“invent” and means “that is not true” and dates back to the ancient Russian *doumati* – “to think, to dream” (Online dictionaries). The etymological dictionary of the Russian language by Max Fasmer), and in French “Invention” means “invention, discovery” and is derived from the Latin *inventio* – “search, invent, and think out” (Cnrtl). Thus, in the French language “Figment” is associated with the invention of something in science, and in the Russian language, this word is understood as fiction. “Skazka/ Fairytale” in the Russian language has the following definition “literary narrative work with an incredible, magical plot” and dates back to the old Russian *съказька* “say, tell” (Online dictionaries). The etymological dictionary of the Russian language by Max Fasmer). The word “Conte” in French goes back to *conter* and has the meaning “narrative of events or imagined actions” (Cnrtl). Thus, the etymological analysis showed the similarity between the synonymic pair “Skazka (Fairytale)/Conte” in the original meaning “something to say, to tell”.

The lexeme “*Basnya/Fable*” means “a short allegorical story with a moral conclusion”, which is derived from the Slavic *basn’* “fable, spell” (Online Dictionaries). The etymological dictionary of the Russian language by Max Fasmer). The French word “Fable” dates back to the Latin *fabula* and has the meaning “a story expressing well-known truths” (Cnrtl). Thus, between the lexeme “Skazka/Fairytale” in Russian and “Fable” in the French language is a similarity in the modern sense. “*Voobrazhenie/Imagination*” in Russian means “the ability to think in images” and goes back to the old Slavonic *obraz* “view, image” (Online Dictionaries). The etymological dictionary of

the Russian language by Max Fasmer), whereas in French “Imagination” is derived from the Latin *imaginari* and means “to imagine, to represent” (Cnrtl). Etymological analysis between the synonymous pair “*Voo Brazhenie/Imagination*” showed similarities in the meaning of “to imagine”. The lexeme “*Mistificatsiya/Hoax*” in Russian means “intentional misrepresentation” and is derived from the French mystification “deception, swindle” which goes back to the Greek *mustes* “mystery, mysticism” (Online Dictionaries). The etymological dictionary of the Russian language by Max Fasmer). Thus, there is an etymological relationship between these lexemes. Analyzing the semantic group “Fiction” of the nuclear concept “Lie” in the French and Russian languages, we can trace the distinctive feature of the Russian language, which is manifested in the presence of such lexemes as *Chastushki/Ditties* (folklore), *Sochnitel’stvo/Inventing* (excogitation), *Izmyshlenie/Fabrication* (created in the imagination), *Imaginary* (fictional). The linguistic and cultural concept “Lie” in both languages being compared has the meaning “Cunning”, which is represented by the following synonymous pairs: “*Zhulnichestvo/Scam/Tricherie*”, “*Ulovka/Gimmick/Ruse*”, “*Khitrost’/Cunning/Malice*”, “*Tryuk/Trick/Truc*”.

Table 5. “Cunning” in French and Russian

French	Russian
	<i>Lukavstvo/Slyness</i>
	<i>Zhulnichestvo/Scam/Tricherie</i> <i>Ulovka/Gimmick/Ruse</i> <i>Khitrost’/Cunning/Malice</i> <i>Tryuk/Trick/Truc</i>

Let us analyze each of these pairs in more detail at the moments of similarity and difference in the language picture of the world in the studied languages. "Zhulnichestvo/Scam" in Russian means "fraud" and goes back to a rogue formed from zhulit'/cheat – "cut", in Russian Argo the rogue had the meaning "disciple of the criminal" (Online Dictionaries). The etymological dictionary of the Russian language by Max Fasmer), whereas in the French language tricherie has the meaning "deception" and dates back to the Latin folk tricari – "deceiver"(Cnrtl). Etymological analysis shows the similarity between these lexemes in the modern meaning "deception". "Ulovka/Gimmick" in Russian means "clever technique used to achieve something" and goes back to the word dexterous (Online Dictionaries). The etymological dictionary of the Russian language by Max Fasmer), whereas in French "Ruse" means "cunning, guile" and goes back to the French ruser – "to retreat, to move back, to go back" (Cnrtl). The etymological similarity in plan between these lexemes is not observed. "Khitrost'/Cunning" in Russian means "pretense, slyfoxery" and goes back to the adjective cunning, next to the Slavonic хитръ – "dexterous, competent, experienced" (Online Dictionaries). The etymological dictionary of the Russian language by Max Fasmer), and in French "Malice" has the definition of "play a trick on someone" and is formed from the Latin malitia – "anger, evil trick" (Cnrtl). Thus, the etymological similarity between these lexemes is not observed, as the lexeme "khitrost'/ cunning" in Russian means "pretense", and in French – "evil trick".

“Tryuk/Trick” in the Russian language has the meaning “dexterous, risk technique, which is difficult to an inexperienced person to repeat” and dates back to the French *truc* – “agility, dexterity” (Online Dictionaries). The etymological dictionary of the Russian language by Max Fasmer). Despite the etymological relationship between these lexemes, they have different meanings in modern use. In the semantic group “Cunning” of the synonymous series of the nuclear lexeme “Lie/Mensonge” a distinctive feature of the Russian language is the presence of the concept “Luklavstvo/Slyness” (insincerity). In both Russian and French, the term “Fraud” is presented in pairs of synonyms: “Moshennichestvo/Fraud/Esroquerie”, “Poddelka/Fake/Arnaque”, “Podlog/Forgery/Faux” (Compare table 13).

Table 6. “Fraud” in French and Russian

French		Russian
Extorquer (to force, to extort) Soutirer (to transfuse, to decant) Estamper (to stamp, to mint) Filouter (to cheat)	Moshennichestvo/Fraud/Esroquerie Poddelka/Fake/Arnaque Podlog/Forgery/Faux	Naduvatestvo/Swindle

Let us consider the etymology of these synonymous pairs to identify similarities between the matching lexemes. “Moshennichestvo/Fraud” in Russian means “behavior, fraudster’s way of action” and goes back to the proto-Slavic *мошна* – “wallet” (Online Dictionaries). The etymological dictionary of the Russian

language by Max Fasmer), in French "Escroquerie" means "fraud, scam, deception" (as an action) and goes back to the Italian scroccare – "remove" from the hook, unhook" (Cnrtl). The similarity between the lexemes "Moshennichestvo/Fraud/Escroquerie" manifests in the modern meaning "deception as an action". "Poddelka/Fake" in Russian has the definition "bogus" and is formed from the proto-Slavic delati – "to do" (Online Dictionaries). The etymological dictionary of the Russian language by Max Fasmer), and in French "Arnaque" means "fraud, deception (as a thing)" and goes back to harnacher – "to deceive" (Cnrtl). Thus, the etymological analysis showed the differences between this pair in semantic terms. The lexeme "Podlog/Forgery" in the Russian language is "forgery of something for the purpose of deception" and is formed from the pod+lozhit'/under+put, which dates back to the proto-Slavic loziti (Online Dictionaries). The etymological dictionary of the Russian language by Max Fasmer), and in French "Faux" means "fake, spurious", which is formed from the Latin falx – "to mow, to bevel" (Cnrtl). Thus, the similarity in these lexemes is observed only in the modern meaning "fake". A distinctive feature of the French language semantic group "Fraud" is the presence of such lexemes as Extorquer (to force, to extort), Soutirer (to transfuse, to decant), Estamper (to stamp, to mint), Filouter (to cheat), and the Russian language – Naduvatelstvo/Swindle (deception).

4. CONCLUSION

The comparative analysis of the linguistic and cultural concept “Lie” in French and Russian can lead to the following conclusions. Traditionally, lie in both languages is understood as a deliberate distortion of reality, as told untruth, as the implementation of the intention to mislead. In the minds of Russian people, Lie seems like something liquid that bears a negative character. For example, Lie is often in the form of a certain swamp in which you can get bogged down. Nebula, turbidity, opacity in both air and water symbolize the impurity of the narrative, impure thoughts, behind which there is a temptation or something evil. Also, Lie is understood as dirt, in which you can get dirty, tarnish yourself and your reputation. Dirt – this is the image, which is associated with blackness, darkness and evil. Thus, we can say that there are differences between the concepts of untruth and lie, because it cannot be said about the untruth, that it is mean, vile, etc., but all these concepts are perfectly suited to the word lie. The French associate Lie with fabric, though there is a similar analogy in the Russian language: *shitobelyminikami/sewn with white threads*, meaning that deception is too well visible. Deception is also associated with food, which is rather a universal association in languages. In the Russian language there is the expression: *On kormitmenyazavtrakami/He feeds me breakfast*, or *Sytpogorlo/Fed up*. At comparing synonymous series of nuclear lexemes “Lie/Mensonge”, it can be found that Lie in both languages is represented by the following concepts:

- “Obman/Deception/Tromperie”, however, the distinguishing feature of the Russian language is the existence of lexemes like

Vraki/Bull (fiction, nonsense), Falsh⁷/Falsehood (insincerity, pretense), Krivda/Drool (untruth), Dezinformatsiya/Disinformation (false information), Zabluzhdenie/Misconception (erroneous opinion).

- “Vydumka/Figment/Invention”, but in Russian there are concepts: Vymysel/Fiction (something created by the imagination), Chastushki/Ditties (folklore), Sochinitel’stvo/Inventing (excogitation), Izmyshlenie/Fabrication (created in the imagination), Mnimy/Imaginary (fictional).

- “Khitrost⁷/Cunning / Malice”, a distinctive feature of the Russian language is the presence of the concept Lukavstvo/Slyness (insincerity).

- “Moshennichestvo/Fraud/Esroquerie”, in this semantic group a distinctive feature of the French language is the presence of concepts such as Extorquer (to force, to extort), Soutirer (to transfuse, to decant), Estamper (to stamp, to mint), Filouter (to cheat), and the Russian language – the concept Naduvatel’stvo/Swindle (deception).

Etymological analysis of synonymic pairs of the nuclear lexemes “Lie/Mensonge” showed more similarity in modern meanings between lexemes than in their origin. Thus, a comparative analysis of the semantics of the lexemes representing the concept “Lie” in the French and Russian languages showed more similarities than differences, which confirm the long-term relationship of these

languages, as well as the similarity of language pictures of the world and the culture of the people.

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