

## THE PROBLEM OF INTERACTION OF CONCEPTS GUILT/ВИНА AND CONSCIENCE/СОВЕСТЬ IN THE RUSSIAN AND ENGLISH LINGUOCULTURES

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### ABSTRACT

The article represents a description of different lexical means of the concepts' *guilt/вина* and *conscience/совесть* verbalization in the English and Russian languages. The main idea of the research is to reveal the true nature of different lexical means that can motivate different meanings on the functional level. The lexemes, their dictionary definitions and contextual use are analyzed from the point of view of the cognitive approach. Taking into consideration the empirical data of the English and Russian languages analyzed, the comparative analysis is seen as very important. It gives many reasons for the perspective study of the named phenomena verbalization in other languages as well, in order to form a whole picture of linguocultural representation of moral concepts.

**Key words:** concepts; lexical units; verbs; phrases; semantics; verbalization; difference

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The problem of correlation of concepts, which transmit clearly nonpositive state of human mental world and are traditionally associated with the concepts study, like *guilt/вина*, *стыд/shame* and *совесть/conscience* in the Russian language is one of the most interesting problems, especially when we deal with the fact of thought and language interaction, particularly with the reflection of the named concepts in the structures of the human mind and their verbalization by lexical means in different languages [2, 4, 5].

Obviously, this is due to the fact that *conscience* occupies one of the central places among the philosophic problems of ethics as well as among the problems of its lexical representation investigation. The outline of the latter problem is given in the work by N.D. Arutyunova *Styd i Sovest'* [1]. This book sets out not only the functional features of these words in the modern Russian language and its earlier forms in the diachronical aspect, but also reflects these moral and ethical concepts in linguistic form, traces patterns of concept's formation.

Equally important is the other aspect of the relationship of rational, moral and ethical sides of human life, revealed in the work of E.V. Uryson *Golos Razuma i Sovesti* [9]. It reveals a close correlation of concepts of mind and conscience. But it shows that the mind is a given system of higher nervous activity, which operates the information provided by the sensory organs of perception and consciousness, it forms a certain knowledge of the objective world and the actions of people.

Thus, the data about reason and knowledge is organized in concepts. But there is a link between conscience and guilt, which is based on the two sides of a single cognitive entity. For example, the famous Russian psychologist E.P. Ilina considers the combination of guilt and conscience as a reflection of the real world [6]. But what exactly these extralinguistic notions mean in the Russian and English linguocultures will be vividly seen in the further comparative analysis combined with the cognitive approach.

### 2. METHODS

As it is mentioned above, the ongoing research is mainly based on the cognitive methodology in combination with the comparative analysis. The latter is seen as the most important method to reveal the true nature of the studied concepts in the English and Russian linguocultures. The main part of this linguistic method is

aimed at the lexical level of the ongoing research. In other words comparative analysis deals with dictionary definitions, functional features of words and their combinability in the English and Russian languages.

### 3. THE MAIN PART

If we take the Russian language data and analyze the relation of moral and ethical concepts transmitted by nouns *сознание*, *признание*, *осознание*, *совесть*, and verbs *сознавать*, *признавать*, *осознавать*, *совестить(ся)*, we immediately see lingvosemantic difference between the words *совесть* and *сознание*. The word *совесть* has many meanings. These meanings reveal the readiness of biological creatures to perform intellectual activity (*потерять сознание, в полном уме и сознании*, etc.), as well as cognitive processing of certain phenomena of moral and ethical aspect (*чувство вины* etc). The word *совесть* (conscience) and its semantics clearly points to the second reality, and thus it does not function as a motivator to the verb *совестаться* (Russian: *have a discussion*).

As for given verbs, they clearly point to the different semantic roles of their potential actants [3]. If a person is aware (*сознает*) of his guilt or realizes that he is guilty, it may actually be equal to his confession (*сознаться*). However, this does not preclude misunderstanding of his guilt, if for example a person is sure that his act was done for someone else's benefit.

Congruent semantic relationships exist between the pair *признавать* and *признаваться*. It should be noted that these verbs are used when expressing the semantics of guilt. But at the same time not only one person can feel guilty (*признавать виновным*) but the other people too (e.g. *Подсудимый, Вы признаете себя виновным?... Заслушав дело по обвинению..., суд признал виновным в... Признавать* can be used with the *sirkonstant* (*кого-то виновным в...*), or without it (*признавать свою вину*). For the word *признаться* a *sirkonstant* is obligatory in terms of semantics, no matter if it is explicated or implied. At the same time, the differences between *совестить кого-то* and *совеститься* are clear. They are mostly categorical differences. The pair *осознавать* and *осознание* while expressing guilt are congruent to *сознавать* and *сознание*, but differ in categorical terms from *perfect* and *non-perfect*.

These differences become quite apparent when we refer to the empirical material in English. At the first glance, the already mentioned word *conscience* in its conceptual scope is wider than Russian words *сознание* and *совесть*. But the complex opinion is seen from the analysis of the compatibility of the word. So, *conscience* in the sense of *understanding, awareness of a fact of reality, not necessarily guilt* is not used with the definitions as in the subject and in the object position. At the same time, the meaning of this word, which reflects the correlation of consciousness and moral and ethical standards, can be defined as, for example, *guilty conscience* or *clear conscience*.

By the way, the interesting fact is that the Russian equivalents of verbs *осознавать* and *сознавать* stand to the English predicates of state *to be conscious (of)*, *to be aware (of)*, verbs *realize* and *understand*. Semantic differences between the concepts *признавать* and *признаваться* verbalized by English lexemes are also quite vivid. Moreover, the difference between the agentive and reflexive features of meaning of the words are also verbalized.

The same can be also said of the differences between the two Russian words *сознание* and *совесть*. So we may speak of *несчастливая совесть* but not of *\*несчастное сознание*. In fact, the most part of English dictionaries [7, 8, 10] refer the word to the conceptual sphere of conscience, and to the given graphical image. Of course, in English, this is explained because of its contamination of the word *unconsciousness*. But we must not forget that it is derived from the adjective *conscious*, which is characterized as some intellectual and cognitive activity, and state of moral and ethical character.

So, the phrase equal to *признавать себя (не)виновным* used in the English judicial terminology is generally quite conservative in terms of lingvosemantic subsystem uniquely transmitted by the English phrase *to plead guilty / not guilty*. And *признавать виновным кого-то* or *to be a judged guilty* (literally - *to be judged guilty*), for example:

*Prisoners at the bar,' he said, civilly enough, but with the hint of reprobation in his tone, ' how plead you to these charges brought against you by Mr. Jenkins? Speak singly, if you please: guilty or not guilty? (Judd, D. The Adventures of Long John Silver: 55).*

*Therefore, each of you being a-judged guilty, you are sentenced... to be hanged by the neck until you are dead" (Ibid.: 58).*

However, the word *признаваться* has a wider range of English equivalents. Thus, *признаваться в какой-либо вине или грехе и, искренне каясь в этом, эксплицитовать это признание* is verbalized by the word *confess* in the English language. The latter is also used as a legal term that stands to Russian *явка с повинной, просто признавать свое нехорошее или ошибочное деяние, поражение* or *to acknowledge, to admit*.

In general, it should be noted that the word *признавать(ся)* is probably related to the means of verbalization of the concept sphere *guilt*, so further analysis within this study can hardly give any significant results. Nevertheless, one can hardly speak of a clear division of concept spheres *guilt* and *conscience* because the word *conscience* is usually associated with effective emotional response to someone's (or someone else's) guilt. The exception, perhaps, is concerned with the word *совесть* in the terminological meaning of *вероисповедание, мировоззренческая доктрина/religion, philosophical doctrine* used in the phrase *свобода совести*.

In our opinion, the aspect of differentiation of the semantics of guilt and conscience, reflected in the functioning of linguistic units of studied languages is also very important. Usually the meaning of the word *совесть* in the Russian language is associated with the person's understanding his/her own actions. However,

there are cases where we have some certain mental discomfort not only because of understand of their irrational or immoral actions, but also of the understanding of such acts performed by the others. Most often it concerns people close to us (family, friends), but it may also concern people completely unfamiliar to us. In such cases we say that we *are ashamed of these people/нам стыдно за этих людей* or *we are ashamed of them/мы стыдимся этих людей*.

But at the same time, the Russian language is often used to reflect such situations with the help of impersonal (still implying a specific subject) phrase *Мне совестно за тебя/вас/них*. At the same time such variations are not possible in the English language. The noun *conscience* describes the individual's conscience, particularly the emotions and feelings experienced as a result of wrong individual actions. As for the qualification of some deviant behavior of other individuals one can only verbalize the concept of *стыд/shame* by means of a noun, or a predicate: *Shame on you! = I am ashamed of you*.

#### 4. RESULTS

Concepts *guilt/вина* and *conscience/совесть* seem to be very specific as seen from the comparative analysis of lexemes verbalizing it in the Russian and English language. The latter proves that the Russian language is much more expressive in the comparison with the English language where lexemes so to say choose definite lines of their meaning development on systemic and functional levels.

#### 5. CONCLUSION

Thus, the concepts of *guilt/вина* and *conscience/совесть* have enough basis for crossing their spheres, and this is reflected in the semantics and functioning of lexical items that verbalize these concepts, in the Russian and English languages. Of course, using the material of the two languages is not enough to draw any vivid conclusions about the universal character of such a connection from the scientific point of view. Therefore, this problem seems to be quite promising for research on the material of several languages, and in this respect may be of some interest for the contrastive study of the semantics of linguistic units.

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