TERMINOLOGY OF KINSHIP RELATIONS IN THE RUSSIAN LANGUAGE DISCOURSE OF THE 21st CENTURY

Keywords: person nominations, kinship terms, Russian language of the 21st century, intra- and extra-linguistic tendencies

Abstract: The paper reveals the peculiarities of the functioning of kinship relations terminology in Russian language discourse of the 21st century. The review of subject-oriented scientific literature and discourse use of relationship terms in fiction and mass media of the 20th – 21st century makes it possible to distinguish several tendencies in the functioning of relationship nominations in the Modern Russian language. They are characterized by interdisciplinary and synergetic features and demonstrate the unity of genealogical, mental, social, cultural and linguistic processes and principles typical for a modern Russian society.

Modern language discourse of the 21st century is focused on one of the main parts of speech, which is, beyond any doubt, the noun, having concentrated the fundamental notions and key relations in the characteristics of the society and the language. Moreover, special attention is paid to nouns, which belong to the class of person nominations: they are peculiar in their semantics, interesting from a word-formation point of view, specific morphologically and stylistically. It is necessary to note that person nominations basically enable us to study the language in its connection with the general conditions of its functioning: the study of such nominations makes it possible to see the reaction of the lexical system to social factors. Nominations are facts of the intellectual culture of a nation (an ethnic group), which create the steady relational ground of this culture – names of kinship, authority, law, economic relations, human, animals, etc., as well as reflect deeply rooted traditions of culture discovered while being historically reconstructed (Yarceva 1990, 175).

Linguistic literature makes it obvious that noun nominations of a person are characterized by a semantic duality, which appears as a result of the process when these names are strongly associated with the actions, activity or behaviour of their objects (Arutjunova 1976, 146), reflect different sides of human life in their meaning (Shmelev 1973, 116) and, to a greater degree, are used not so much to name a person as to give brief information about him or express one’s attitude to him (Shmelev 1973, 344;
As a result, it is possible to mark a special group of nouns, which serve to denote relations between people or name people who are in relationships classified as interindividual, intersubjective (Shpet 1989, 541) or interpersonal (Zhdanova/Revzina 1992, 46). Such nouns are called relational nouns (relator nouns), and the meaning they have is called relational.

The term “relational meaning” is used both in its narrow and broad sense. On the one hand, “relational meaning corresponds to a characterized or non-characterized relation between two objects... It combines homogeneous entities” (Arutjunova 1980, 234). On the other hand, it denotes “any lexical meaning, which has a relational component” (ibidem).

It is the type of relationship between the specified objects – symmetrical or non-symmetrical – that divides the relational nouns into two figurative groups. The symmetrical relational type includes nouns denoting persons by their relations to joint activity and common entrance into any community: собеседник, сослуживец, сотрудник, соавтор, друг, компаньон, etc. If a person has an object-oriented function and a relational component can be found in functional nominations, this type of relationship is called non-symmetrical. It includes a) kinship terms and words similar to them (отец, мать, дед, бабушка, жених, невеста, etc.); b) nouns nominating persons by relationships of dependency, authority and subordination (начальник, подчиненный, вассал, раб, etc.); c) nominations denoting persons by relationships of patronage, guarding (шеф, опекун, воспитанник, etc.) (Sandakova 1996, 37). In some cases the correlation of object names appears due to the relational predicate carrying the mediation function between them: врач (to cure) пациент, учитель (to teach) ученик, родители (to give berth) дети, etc. (Vasil'ev 1994, 28).

Linguists pay special attention to these two types of relational nouns and consider them with different degrees of detalization, from different points of view both synchronically and diachronically. However, kinship terms meet the highest popularity among specialists of various fields of both humanitarian and scientific significance.

The kinship phenomenon, as a unity of genealogical, mental, social and cultural interrelations between the members of the community, has often been and is still considered as a subject matter of several disciplines – history of society, ethnography, anthropology, history of material culture, philosophy, semiotics, cultural studies, as well as biology, genetics, psychoanalyses, etc. (Benveniste 1995; Girenko 1974; Levin 1970; Old’erogge 1958; Poljakov 1983; Goodenough 1956, Greenberg 1949; Lounsbury 1956, etc.).

Russian linguists challenged the problem of kinship terminology and focused on its thorough and detailed investigation as “a complex of sign forms, which appeared as a result of several transformations of interindividual relations determined by practice” (Poljakov 1983, 50), as “a complex of linguistic factors indicating historical contacts of nations, on the one hand, and resources of language, on the other
hand” (Mejlanova 1985, 114), as well as a specific lexical-semantic group of words characterized by a number of distinctive features.

Russian language literature of the 20th century demonstrated a wide range of scientific ideas concerning kinship terminology. A considerable part of the analysis of kinship relations was represented by comparative and etymological studies (Isachenko 1953; Kolesov 1986; Trubachjov 1957; Trubachjov 1959; Filin 1948, etc.), as well as by comparative-typological research based on different languages, including Russian (Gan-Govej 1994; Mejlanova 1985; Nguyen Dyk Tin’ 1981; Sarybaeva 1991, etc.). The semantics of kinship nominations was described in reasonable details (Moiseev 1962; Moiseev 1963, etc.), whereas the derivational, morphological, syntactical and dialectal peculiarities and features of kinship terms were given less attention (Zaharova 1990; Larina 1990; Yudina 2000, etc.).

It is necessary to note that in the 21st century kinship terms continue to be a highly regarded and studied object of linguistic research. Moreover, the terminology of kinship relations has turned out to be helpful in supporting data for the analysis and evaluation of language phenomena and processes viewed from the anthropocentric paradigm. The present-day interest of linguists is focused on the place of kinship terms in the system of language and the method of their perception by various language speakers (Kara-Ool 2003; Li 2013), on the description of the linguo-cultural and ethno-cultural nature of the terminology of kinship relations (Bliznjuk 2006; Mikitenko 2004; Pjagaj 2007), as well as on the place of kinship nomination in the language worldview of certain nations and representatives of territorial dialects (Kachinskaja 2011).

The results of this research made it possible to conclude that noun-terms of kinship relations (отец, мать, сын, дочь, дед, прадед, бабушка, прабабушка, внук, правнук, внучка, правнучка, брат, сестра, тётя, тетя, племянник, племянница, зять, сноха, теща, свекор, свекровь, невеста, замуж, муж, жена) are seen as a rather isolated lexi-co-semantic group of words, which stays apart from other lexi-co-semantic groups of nouns due to a number of distinctive features: relative character of semantics, prior use in speech with a denotative meaning, contextual definiteness, specificity, individual quality, identified character of persons who are the participants of a speech act, prior use of a statement in the topical context, etc.

In this regard, special attention should be paid to several tendencies and principles in the functioning of the terminology of kinship relations in the Russian language discourse of the 21st century.

1. Any culture or civilization tends to view the system of kinship terms as a result of socio-cultural, genetic and mental contacts of the members of the community. This is a way to show that linguistic terminology of kinship relations is derivative and primarily depends on the extra-linguistic features of a contemporary society. The more socio-political, socio-cultural and mental values are changed, the more all
existing kinship nominations are redefined as well, due to the fact that the system of kinship terms basically reflects the ethno-cultural and social model of a prototype family as the characteristic of a certain time span. Such a tendency can be recognized in the Russian language discourse of the 21st century, indeed. In this regard, one has to agree with the idea of A. Kiklewicz that

any culture is based on various points of view and lacks an absolute homogeneous character. Moreover, any culture is historically changeable and each of its new formations combines both new and old elements. Therefore, the system of values tends to be self-contradictory (Kiklewicz 2013, 279).

2. The system of kinship terms has a strong classificatory character. It is mainly symmetrical and sufficiently changeable. However, linguists admit that the terminology of proper kinship relations is much more resistant to changes than the terminology of properties. The systems of kinship terms (as well as their subsystems) do not enable new terms to appear. Variations are possible due to the fact that a part of the terms come to be archaic. Moreover, the evolution of the system itself is caused not as much by intra-linguistic factors as by the extra-linguistic environment.

3. The analysis of the contemporary Russian language terminology of kinship relations and scientific literature on the problem makes it possible to admit that so far the Russian language does not have a common set of kinship terms. Linguists recognize real kinship characterized by actual genetic binds: natural (blood) kinship (мать) and by legally enforceable marriage: in-law kinship (муж), equivalent, step-(приемная мать, мачеха) and imitative (made-up) kinship (крестная мать); lineal relations (родители и дети) and collateral lines (братья и сестры, дядя и племянники); ascending lines (правнук, внук, сын, отец, дед, прадед) and descending lines (прадед, дед); the nearest kinship (отец, сын) and remote (distant) kinship (дядя, деверь) (Moiseev 1963; Sarybaeva 1991; Trubachjov 1959, etc.). Indisputable kinship terms are nominations of persons, who have real genetic binds with each other: отец, мать, сын, дочь, дед, прадед, бабушка, прабабушка, внук, правнук, внучка, правнучка, брат, сестра, дядя, тетя, племянник, племянница. They also are likely to include the terms of property (in-law kinship): зять, сноха (невестка), тестя, теща, свояченица, свекор, свекровь, деверь, золовка, свояк, сват and сватья (as parents of one of the marital partners are related to parents of the other one). The problem of some words that are referred to the group of kinship terms is still disputable. On the one hand, not all linguists admit such nominations as муж, жена, жених, невеста as terms of kinship (Moiseev 1963, 121). On the other hand, some scholars consider several nominations to be included into the group of kinship terms: отчим, мачеха, пасынок, падчерица (See: Trubachjov 1959, 15); крестник, крестница, крестный, крестная, кум, кума (Moiseev 1963, 121).
4. The contemporary development of the Russian lexical system of the 21st century allows us to speak about several classifications, which can provide a further study of terminology of kinship relations:

I. As seen from origin:
   1) original (native):
      – Indo-European (мать, брат, дочь);
      – Common Slavic (дед, внук, жених);
      – Eastern-Slavic, or Old Russian (дядя, племянник, падчерица);
   2) borrowed (кузен, кузина);
   3) special group of nouns originating from the so-called “baby language” (cf. mama, tata and etc.). However, following the idea of O. N. Trubachjov, it is still a sophisticated linguistic problem.

II. As seen from distribution (usage):
   1) commonly used (мать, отец, сын, дочь, брат, сестра);
   2) territorially or socially limited (братан = старший брат, племянник, двоюродный брат; мать – dial. мамушка, помайчина; внук – dial. мнук, мнучок, etc.).

III. As seen from frequent (active) or non-frequent (passive) usage in speech:
   1) contemporary (жена брата мужа, дядя по отцу, дядя по матери) and archaic (ятровь, стрый, уй);
   2) active (frequent) (отец, мать, дядя, сестра, брат, муж, жена) and passive (non-frequent) (деверь, шурин, свояк, свояченица).

IV. As seen from expressive and stylistic function, cf.: дочь – дочка, доченька, дочурка; мать – мама, мамочка, матушка, маменька, мамаша.

V. Unique (сестра) and having doublet-synonyms (отец – родитель, батя, тятя, папа, батюшка).

5. It is obvious that by the beginning of the 21st century a specific lexico-semantic group of kinship terms has been determined as a subsystem with a limited number of items, which due to some extra-linguistic reasons (partial devaluation of family properties, divorce, loss of close connections with different lines and branches of relatives, domination of social net-work communication over real personal relations, etc.) is not semantically renewed but modified: old nominations vanish giving way to new ones (represented, as a rule, in the form of descriptions): cf. деверь = брат мужа; шурин = брат жены.

To summarize, the functioning of kinship terminology in Modern Russian might already seem to be clearly and thoroughly studied, it remains, however, highly essential as seen from the intra-linguistic and extra-linguistic aspects. It is indisputable that the system of kinship terms is a perspective object of interdisciplinary and synergetic research. In this regard, A. Zalevskaja makes a fairly reasonable conclusion that to continue the struggle for pure control of linguistics “it is necessary to retreat from setting unreachable goals and tasks, which are impossible to settle applying only linguistic methods” (Zalevskaja 2013, 468). However, it is obvious that studying
the functioning of kinship noun-terms in Russian language discourse makes it possible to reveal a number of important social, cultural and mental principles of the development of the modern Russian community of the 21st century.

References

Filin, F. P. (1948), O terminah rodstva i rodstvennyh otnoshenij v drevnerusskom literaturnom jazyke. In: Jazyk i myshlenie. II. Moscow/Leningrad.
Kolesov, V. V. (1986), Mir cheloveka v slove Drevnej Rusi. Leningrad.
Lui, E. V. (2003), Terminy rodstva v sisteme jazyka i v soznanii raznojazychnyh nositelej (na primere russkogo i korejskogo jazykov). Kemerovo [synopsis of PhD thesis].
Shmelev, D. N. (1973), Problemy semanticheskogo analiza leksiki. Moscow.