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**LINGUISTIC OBJECTIFICATION OF STEREOTYPICAL PERCEPTION OF  
INTERPERSONAL ROLES OF MEN AND WOMEN (PSYCHOLOGICAL BASIS) IN  
THE TEXT OF THE ENGLISH-LANGUAGE ANECDOTE**

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*Linguistic objectification of stereotypical perception of interpersonal roles of men and women (psychological basis) in the text of the English-language anecdote. The article is devoted to the issue of studying the linguistic objectification of stereotypical perception about the interpersonal roles of men and women (psychological basis) in the text of the English-language anecdote. The results of the analysis suggest that the anecdotes, carnivalizing family relationships in English-speaking culture, are generally based on the presuppositions of traditional patriarchal stereotypes. The interpersonal roles of husband and wife have an economic and psychological grounds. The economic ground is determined by the sexual distribution of human activities, taking into account the physiological ability of women to bear children and thus reproducing the workforce. This distribution of roles gives a man economic power over a woman, assigning the social and psychological role of the head of the family to him, whose duties include financial support of the family, and imposes the role of a wife/ housewife/mother on a woman, who has to take care of household issues. The psychological ground of interpersonal roles of husband and wife is directly related to the economic one. The real interpersonal roles of a husband and wife in the patriarchal English-speaking culture are symbolized as the breadwinner-protector and keeper of the hearth respectively. Anecdotes objectifying the interpersonal roles of husband and wife predominantly demonstrate traditional patriarchal values of a family life, presenting the relationship of a man and woman in marriage as antagonistic. Both men and women view marriage from the negative side: a husband's perception of a matrimony is defined by responsibility, which implies the role of the head of the family, and difficulties in establishing control over the wife due to such stereotypical qualities as dominance, stubbornness, quarrelsomeness, unpredictability, whereas a wife's perception reflects the loss of love romanticism and her husband's attention.*

**Keywords:** English-language anecdote, interpersonal roles, breadwinner-protector, keeper of the hearth.

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## МОВНА ОБ'ЄКТИВАЦІЯ СТЕРЕОТИПНИХ УЯВЛЕНЬ ПРО МІЖСОБИСТІСНІ РОЛІ ЧОЛОВІКА ТА ЖІНКИ (ПСИХОЛОГІЧНЕ ПІДҐРУНТЯ) У ТЕКСТІ АНГЛОМОВНОГО АНЕКДОТУ

Птушка А. С., Пруднікова А. О.

У статті порушено питання дослідження мовної об'єктивності стереотипних уявлень про міжособистісні ролі чоловіка та жінки (психологічне підґрунтя) у тексті англomовного анекдоту. Результати аналізу дають підстави зазначити, що анекдоти, які карнавалізують сімейні стосунки в англomовній культурі, як правило, відштовхуються від пресупозицій традиційних патріархальних стереотипів. Міжособистісні ролі чоловіка та дружини мають економічне й психологічне підґрунтя. Економічне підґрунтя визначено статевим розподілом видів діяльності з урахуванням фізіологічної здатності жінки до дітонародження й тим самим відтворення робочої сили. Такий розподіл ролей дає чоловікові економічну владу над жінкою, закріплюючи за ним соціально-психологічну роль глави сім'ї, в обов'язки якого входить фінансове забезпечення родини, і залишає жінці роль дружини / домогосподарки / матері, яка має опікуватися проблемами побуту. Психологічне підґрунтя міжособистісних ролей чоловіка й дружини безпосередньо пов'язане з економічним. Реальні міжособистісні ролі чоловіка та дружини в патріархальній англomовній культурі символізовані як добувач-годувальник-захисник та берегиня домашнього вогнища. Анекдоти, що об'єктивують міжособистісні ролі чоловіка й дружини, переважно демонструють традиційні патріархальні цінності сімейного життя, подаючи стосунки чоловіка й жінки в шлюбі як антагоністичні. Чоловік та жінка розглядають шлюб із негативного боку: шлюб для чоловіка визначений відповідальністю, що передбачає роль глави сім'ї й труднощами у встановленні контролю над дружиною через такі приписувані їй стереотипні якості, як домінантність, упертість, сварливість, непередбачуваність, а для дружини – утратою романтизму кохання й уваги чоловіка.

**Ключові слова:** англomовний анекдот, міжособистісні ролі, захисник-годувальник, берегиня домашнього вогнища.

**Defining the problem.** This article is devoted to the study of linguistic objectification of stereotypical perception of the interpersonal roles of men and women (psychological basis) in the text of the English-language anecdote. The research is determined by its anthropocentric orientation, which fully corresponds to the modern trends of national linguistics.

**Analysis of previous research and publications.** The English-language anecdote has already been the subject of scientific analysis [1; 2; 4], but this problem still awaits coverage from the position of the cognitive-discursive paradigm, which determines the scientific novelty of the study.

**The object of the article** is the texts of modern English-language anecdotes reflecting gender stereotypes. The subject of the study is the linguistic means of the comic representation of gender

stereotypes in the texts of English-language anecdotes.

**The aim** of the study is to reveal the specifics of linguistic objectification of gender stereotypes in the texts of English-language anecdotes. The research material includes 3760 texts of English-language anecdotes with male and female characters.

**Presentation of the main research material with substantiation of the scientific results obtained.** Interpersonal roles of a husband and wife have economic and psychological grounds.

The economic ground is determined by the gender distribution of human activities, taking into account the physiological ability of women to bear children and, thus, reproduction of the workforce. This division of roles gives a man economic power over a woman, assigning him the socio-psychological role of the head of the family, whose

duties include financial support of the family, and imposes the role of a wife/housewife/mother on a woman, who has to take care of household issues.

The psychological basis of interpersonal roles of a husband and wife is directly related to the economic one. The real interpersonal roles of husband and wife in the patriarchal English-speaking culture are symbolized as the breadwinner-protector and keeper of the hearth respectively.

Anecdotes, objectifying the interpersonal roles of husband and wife, tend to carnivalize the traditional patriarchal values of a family life, presenting the relationship between men and women in marriage as antagonistic [1]. Cf. (1), where the comic effect is a consequence of the reassessment of traditional gender stereotypes assigning the role of the head of the family to a man – a modern husband and wife cannot agree on the best performer of this role:

(1) - *I want to see **the head of the house.***

- *You'll have to wait a minute – **they're just deciding it*** [3: 295].

The institution of marriage itself becomes the object of reassessment. Such anecdotes explicitly or implicitly reflect the male outlook: marriage is presented not as a blessing, but, on the contrary, as a sentence for a man. The comic effect here is based on the unexpected change of patriarchal axiological guidelines:

(2) *Marriage: **The foreclosure of a mortgage on a man's future happiness*** [3: 297].

A man's reluctance to tie the knot is approved:

(3) *A bachelor is a man who **thinks before he acts, and then doesn't act*** [3: 262].

Fifty-year imprisonment is considered a lesser punishment for a man than being married:

(4) *A couple goes out to dinner to celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary. On the way home, she notices a tear in his eye and asks if he's getting*

*sentimental because they're celebrating 50 wonderful years together. He replies, "No, I was thinking about the time before we got married. **Your father threatened me with a shot-gun and said he'd have me thrown in jail for 50 years if I didn't marry you. Tomorrow I would've been a free man!**"* [5].

A number of anecdotes carnivalize the stereotypical idea of a man as a knight who is to win the hand and heart of a beautiful lady and, if his dream does not come true, to grieve about her for the rest of his life. Cf. (5), where the character not only does not grieve over the rejection, but also is ready to express his gratitude by paying the woman for rejecting him 20 years ago, or (6), where it is demonstrated that the one who was rejected has advantages over the one who won the hand and heart of the "beautiful lady", even being in a madhouse:

(5) *The wife was reading the news to her husband. "It says here, " she said", that **a man left \$ 2,000 to the woman who refused to marry him twenty years ago**". "That's what I call gratitude", commented the husband [5].*

(6) *A doctor was showing a friend around a lunatic asylum. "See that man over there", he said. "Yes". "Well, he's the fellow who went mad on the night of his wedding when his girl jilted him". "Too bad". They passed on. Coming to a steel cell in which a man was banging his head against the bars, the doctor said: "Do you know who that is?". "No". **Well, that's the fellow who married the other fellow's girl!**" [3: 151].*

The negative assessment of marriage by a husband is directly related to carnivalization of the traditional symbolic role of a wife as a keeper of the hearth. Instead, from the husband's viewpoint, she appears as a source of problems (7) or the embodiment of evil (8)-(9).

Thus, the comical effect of Anecdote (7), created by the wife's inconsistency with her symbolic role, is intensified by the violation of the logical law of identity (the wife appears as a support in trouble

and as a cause of trouble at the same time):

(7) - *Will you please tell me **what a wife really is**? Some of my friends say their wife is an **angel** and others say theirs is a **she-devil**.*

- *Well, a wife is **a woman who will stick by you in all the trouble you wouldn't have gotten into if you hadn't married her in the first place*** [3: 310].

The comedy of Anecdotes (8) and (9) lies in the metaphorical assimilation of the wife, respectively, to Satan's sister and a volcano due to her negative moral qualities and, in particular, her evil and quarrelsome nature:

(8) *One bright, beautiful Sunday morning, everyone in tiny Jonestown wakes up early and goes to their local church. Before the service starts, the townspeople sit in their pews and talk about their lives, their families, etc.*

*Suddenly, at the altar, Satan appears! Everyone starts screaming and running for the front entrance, trampling each other in their determined efforts to get way from evil incarnate.*

*Soon, everyone is evacuated from the church except for one man, who sits calmly in his pew, seemingly oblivious to the fact that God's ultimate enemy is in his presence. This confuses Satan a bit. Satan walks up to the man and says, "Hey, don't you know who I am?"*

*The man says, "Yep, sure do".*

- ***Satan says, "Well, aren't you afraid of me?"***

*The man says, "Well, **I've been married to your sister for 25 years**"* [5].

(9) - *I saw that famous volcano.*

- *What?*

- ***Volcano – you know, one of those things that belches and spits fire.***

- *Oh sure – landsakes, **I married one*** [3: 398].

If in the first case, from the husband's point of view, the wife is the object of utilitarian evaluation defined as "harmful" (because marriage causes problems - financial care of the family, psychological burden associated with

decision-making as the head of the family – it jeopardizes the interests of the husband, in other words, does not meet utilitarian norms of safety: maxims "You should be careful / You should not make hasty decisions"), in the second case, moral and ethical evaluation defined as "unacceptable" (the wife assimilation to Satan or a volcano implies certain moral and ethical qualities associated with the phenomenon of evil).

According to the anecdotes thematic content analysis in the examples given, a negative assessment of the wife by her husband may be a consequence of the loss of interest in her: playing the role of a housewife, a woman stays at home and gradually loses the standard feminine qualities (charm, elegance, sexuality, mystery, etc.), turning into a burden. Another reason is the husband's inability to control his dominant wife, and thus to meet the requirements of the standard masculine role of the head of the family.

In the jokes of the first type, the wife character is usually ridiculed for not conforming to the norms of realism (the maxim "One should be aware of the real state of things"), and the husband – to the moral and ethical norms of contact.

Thus, in Example (10), the wife suspects that her husband has lost interest in her only after his seven-year absence; the woman's speech is characterized by phonetic and grammatical errors, which emphasizes her low not only intellectual, but also general educational level:

(10) - *D'ya know, Mrs. Harris, I sometimes wonder if me husband's grown tired of me.*

- *What ever makes you say that, Mrs. Jiggs?*

- ***Well, he ain't been home for seven years*** [3: 301].

The comedy effect of Example (11) is based on the violation of the norms of contact by the male character (the maxim "One should be sincere"): he is not willing to call things by their proper names and pretends not to know the cause of his wife's insomnia and not to care about her, while in fact he is the

culprit of her problems and can easily solve them by coming home earlier:

(11) - *My wife has insomnia very badly Doctor. She very often remains awake until 2 o'clock in the morning. What shall I do for her?*

- **Go home earlier** [5].

The comic effect of the second type of jokes lies in family values carnivalization, in particular the traditional symbolic roles of the head of the family and the keeper of the hearth: the husband is unable to control the dominant wife and turns into a victim himself. Therefore, the man becomes the object of ridicule for not conforming to the standard (cf. (12) and (13), where the comic effect is enhanced by literal interpretation of the component of the phrase "to keep smb under one's thumb", and by the hyperbolic assimilation of the man to a servant, as the wife expects him to perform so many tasks only Cinderella could cope with):

(12) *(A robust woman lost her thumb in a trolley accident)*

- *But why do you think that your thumb was worth \$20,000?*

- **Because it was the thumb I kept my husband under** [3: 80].

(13) **"I want a man to do odd jobs about the house, run on errands, one who never answers back and is always ready to do my bidding, explained a lady to an applicant for a post in the household. "You are looking for a husband, madam, not a servant!" said the seeker for work** [5].

The husband's inability to control his dominant wife is presented, in particular, as a result of his lack of such a traditional masculine quality as courage. Thus, in Example (14), the male character, instead of responding to the insult, appeals to his wife as his protector and thus becomes the object of negative evaluation both as inconsistent with the standard masculine role of a protector and as a violator of moral and ethical interaction norms (maxims "You cannot be a coward"); the farcical effect is enhanced by the fact that the offense inflicted on the man fully corresponds to

his essence (a man who is not only unable to defend himself and his wife, but also seeks protection from his wife, fits the definition of "a henpecked little shrimp"):

(14) - **You are a henpecked little shrimp!**

- *I'll bet you wouldn't dare say that in the presence of my wife* [3: 223].

The wife's uncontrollability is presented as a consequence of negative stereotypical qualities attributed to her (quarrelsomeness, stubbornness, intolerance, unwillingness to take into account a foreign point of view) or as a reaction to the husband's behavior (drinking, gambling, late return home, adultery).

Examples of the first type of anecdotes are demonstrated in (15)-(16). In Example (15) the comedy effect is the result of a violation of the logical law of non-contradiction: the statements that the husband has not reached a consensus with the wife on some issue and that the wife has no idea about these differences cannot be true at the same time, and in Example (16) – the inconsistency of the male character with the utilitarian norms of realism:

(15) *"Have you and your wife ever had any difference of opinion?" "Yes, but she didn't know it"* [5].

(16) *"Once I didn't talk to my wife for six months," said the husband. "I didn't want to interrupt!"* [5].

In Example (17), the comic effect is related to the violation of the relevance principle (the addressee expects the husband to influence his wife with his lecture and make her save money; instead, the wife forces her husband to do it instead of her):

(17) *"Did you give your wife that little lecture on economy you talked about?" "Yes". "Any results?" "Yes, I've got to give up smoking"* [5].

Anecdotes of the second type include Examples (18)-(19). Example (18) is based on the presupposition that, from the husband's point of view, the behavior of his wife, who calls him a useless, miserable, pitiful, unsuccessful

drunkard, is absolutely normative. The husband's inconsistency with the norms of realism creates a laughable effect:

(18) *A serious drunk walked into a bar and, after staring for some time at the only woman seated at the bar, walked over to her and kissed her. She jumped up and slapped him. He immediately apologized and explained, "I'm sorry. I thought you were my wife. You look exactly like her". "Why you worthless, insufferable, wretched, no good drunk!" she screamed. "Funny", he muttered, "you even sound exactly like her" [5].*

Anecdote (19) is based on the presupposition that it is normal for a man to drink, gamble and think of ways to outwit the megalomaniacal wife he fears (the comedy here is enhanced by the violation of the laws of logic: in the man's interpretation, the reason for the tramp's deplorable state is that he does not consume spirits and does not gamble):

(19) *A bum asks a man for \$2. The man asked, "Will you buy booze?" The bum said, "No". The man asked, "Will you gamble it away?" The bum said, "No". Then the man asked, "Will you come home with me so my wife can see what happens to a man who doesn't drink or gamble?" [5].*

According to the presupposition of the following anecdote, it is natural for a man to return home late at night (the comedy here lies in the discrepancy between the inferences of the addressee and the male character: it is hard to expect that a thief would be needed by a man to consult how best to get into his own house without waking his wife):

(20) - *Could I see the man who was arrested for robbing our house last night?*

- *Why do you want to see him?*

- *I want to ask him how he got in the house without awakening my wife [3: 300].*

Negative assessment of marriage by women is related to the awareness of the fact that with the formalization of relations, the romance of premarital relations is lost and its place is taken by

the routine and monotony associated with the need to run a household (cf. (21)-(22), the comic effect of which is the result of patriarchal standards carnivalization):

(21) - *You seem to like his attentions. Why don't you marry him?*

- **Because I like his attentions** [3: 297].

(22) *When I marry, I'm going to cook, sew and darn my husband's socks, lay out his pipe and slippers, and read to him evenings.*

- *What more could a husband ask for than that?*

- **Nothing unless he wants beauty and romance** [3: 297].

A number of jokes focused on the carnivalization of standard gender roles thematize the situation of physical violence of a wife against an unfaithful husband and vice versa. The characters of such anecdotes appear as inconsistent not only with gender standard roles, but also with supermoral norms (the maxim "You can't do physical harm to your neighbor").

The wife most often punishes the husband for unfaithfulness. Cf. (23), where comedy is achieved by violating the principle of relevance when interpreting the rhetorical question "Then you believe that your husband's death was due to a broken heart?" (the addressee believes the husband to have died because of a weak heart, and the character of a wife actualizes another unexpected meaning: the husband broke her heart, which caused his death):

(23) - *Then you believe that your husband's death was due to a broken heart?*

- **Yes, if he hadn't broken my heart, I wouldn't have shot him** [5].

A husband punishes his wife for inability to manage the house (cf. 24):

(24) *My mother got a black eye last night.*

*She should put a piece of steak on it.*

**If we had steak in the house, my father wouldn't have blacked her eye** [3: 88].

It is interesting that in Example (24) the narrator is a child, the presuppositions of whose statements imply that the mother who is insulted, and not the father who insults, is subject to a negative ethical assessment, which is possible only within the framework of a ridiculous picture of the world, provided that the established values are carnivalized.

The comic effect of anecdotes like (25)-(26) is a consequence of the carnivalization of the maxim of supermoral norms "You should love your neighbor", as well as one of the main postulates of a patriarchal marriage, according to which a husband and wife are of the highest value for each other and should take care of each other, support each other in times of sorrow and joy until the end of the age, etc. Instead, the characters of the jokes act on the basis of the presupposition that the spouse no value for them at all.

Thus, in Example (25), the husband confuses his wife with a commodity, and perceives her fever as an increase in rates on the stock exchange:

(25) – *The doctor said your wife is in hospital with the temperature up to 104. What shall he do?*

- **Tell him to wait until it reaches 105 – and then sell** [3: 96].

In Example (26), a man uses his wife's serious illness as an excuse to get a break from his golf partners:

(26) *Golfer: Pardon, but would you mind if I played through? I've just heard that my wife has been taken seriously ill* [3: 432].

In Example (27) the wife prefers to let her husband die rather than to fulfill the usual conjugal duty:

(27) *A woman accompanied her husband to the doctor's office. At the checkup, the doctor took the wife and told her, "If you don't do the following, your husband will surely die: 1) each morning, fix him a healthy breakfast and send him off to work in a good mood; 2) at lunch, make him a warm nutritious meal and put him in a good frame of mind before he goes back to work. 3) for dinner, fix an especially nice meal, and don't burden*

*him with household chores; 4) have sex with him several times a week and satisfy his every whim". On the way home, the husband asked his wife what the doctor said to her. She replied, "You're going to die"* [5].

In Example (28), the wife considers the convenient location of her hairdressing salon as the only possible reason for her frequent visits to husband's grave at the cemetery after his death:

(28) - *If I should die would you visit my grave often?*

- Yes, **I have to pass the graveyard to go to my hairdresser, anyway** [3: 33].

Based on the presupposition above, a number of anecdotes thematize a situation where a man, contrary to traditional stereotypes, does not grieve, but, on the contrary, rejoices that his wife left him for another:

(29) - *I haven't been able to sleep a wink since my wife ran away.*

- *Why don't you try counting sheep?*

- **I'm too busy counting my lucky stars** [5].

Another group of anecdotes thematizes the situation where a man considers his wife to be a tool to clarify relations with other men or even seeks to get rid of his wife in any possible way:

(30) *Old farmer Johnson was dying. The family was standing around his bed. With a low voice he said to his wife.*

**"When I'm dead I want you to marry farmer Jones"**. Wife: "No, I can't marry anyone after you". Johnson: "But I want you to". Wife: **"But why?"**. Johnson: **"Jones once cheated me in a horse deal!"** [5].

(31) - *I lost my wife at sea. My wife fell overboard and I threw her a tire.*

- Well, the tire should have held her up.

- I know, but **I forgot to take the rim out** [3: 293].

A separate object of farcical representation is such a problem of marriage as a lack of high-quality sexual acts:

(32) *A couple who were married for years, were making love. He asked, "Dear, am I hurting you?" She replied, "No, but why do you ask?" "You moved" [5].*

**Conclusions and perspectives of the research.** Thus, the analysis of the linguistic objectification of stereotypical perception of the English-speaking linguistic culture representatives about the psychological basis of the interpersonal roles of husband and wife shows that the pragmatic function of anecdotes on the one hand represents the carnivalization of the patriarchal institution of marriage and traditional values of a family life, in particular the masculine roles of the head, noble knight, protector and the feminine role of the keeper of the hearth, and on the other hand, the regulation of the behavior of men and women in accordance with these roles are reflected. The regulation function is actualized on the basis of the formation of a gender actant, which is the object of negative ethical or utilitarian evaluation, the feeling of disapproval, neglect or

contempt in relation to an inappropriate standard.

The anecdotes analyzed reveal quantitative and qualitative asymmetry in the representation of a husband and wife interpersonal roles. Quantitative asymmetry is associated with a significant predominance of anecdotes reflecting the male outlook on marriage. Qualitative asymmetry is primarily related to the presuppositions underlying negative assessment of marriage by men and women: for a husband it is determined by responsibility implying the role of the head of the family and difficulties in establishing control over a wife due to such stereotypical qualities as dominance, stubbornness, quarrelsomeness, unpredictability, and for the wife through the loss of romanticism of love and her husband's attention.

The prospect of further research will include the analysis of the linguistic objectification of stereotypical perception about the interpersonal roles of mother-in-law and son-in-law in the text of the English-language anecdote.

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