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## **Linguocultural peculiarities of the concept '*woman*' in the Lak and English languages**

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### **Abstract**

The processes of interaction between different cultures made possible the realization of contrastive approach to linguistics. It is realized through comparison of the elements of the languages belonging to different language groups or even families.

In the given article such distant languages as Lak and English are being considered in reference to the concept '*woman*', as the author of the article believes that the current concept is one of the fundamental elements of any language and society. The article follows the various roles that a woman can play in society, beginning with the role of a daughter and ending with the role of a mature woman with her own ideas and spheres of interest. One of the key-points of the article is the evolution of the concept due to the social, historical and political changes.

Being a complex reality, the concept has many layers, some of which are universal for the representatives of any culture or ethnicity, while others are unique, and, therefore, may serve as an interesting object for linguistic and cultural research.

### **Keywords**

Concept, woman, meaning, linguoculture, Lak, English.

## Introduction

The concept of *woman* is one of the fundamental concepts in the worldview in any language. It is obvious to assume that this concept has layers of universal character, as well as layers inherent in any particular community. The differential nature of these layers is affected greatly by toponymy, ethnicity and even politics. The farther apart the elements that contribute to the concept, then, in our opinion, more interesting their comparison.

The notion of the *concept* is a fundamental in many disciplines. Definition of this term varies depending on whether we consider it as a phenomenon of linguistics, cognitive science or cultural studies. Here are some examples that most vividly convey the differences of these approaches.

Representatives of the linguistic approach to the definition of the concept understand it as a full potential of the word along with its connotative element [Teliya, 1996, 97].

Z.D. Popova and I.A. Sternin and other representatives of the Voronezh scientific schools consider the concept as a global intellectual unit, representing a "quantum of structured knowledge" [Popova, Sternin, 1999, 10-11]. E.S.

Kubryakova defines the concept as "a meaningful operational unit of memory, mental lexicon, conceptual framework and language of the brain, the whole worldview reflected in the psyche" [Kubryakova, 1996, 90-93].

Representatives of the third approach, dealing with the concept, pay great attention to cultural aspects. According to them, the whole culture is understood as a set of concepts and relations between them; "Cultural studies determine the patterns of development of cultures and forms of their definitions, analyzes the cultural context and semi-otic preferences, while providing not individual languages of understanding, but universal schemes for understanding the meaning" [Shemyakina, 2012, 8]. The concept is interpreted by them as a basic element of culture in the mental world of a human being. This viewpoint is supported by Y.S. Stepanov, G.G. Slyshkin.

The author of the article follows the definition of the concept given by E.S. Kubryakova, but today is quite difficult to find a definition of the concept, which would reflect all aspects of this versatile phenomenon.

In this article we consider the concept of *woman* evidenced from Lak and English languages. Affiliation of these languages to such multi-structural

language families as Ibero-Caucasian and Indo-European is one of the factors behind the interest in the comparison, which will be discussed below.

### **Linguistic and cognitive analysis of a pair *душ* (*dush*)-girl as one of the foundations of the concept of *woman***

The concept of "woman" is presented in Lak by several nouns. The first in this series is a word *душ* (*dush*), having the following meanings: 1) daughter; 2) girl, lady.

Here are examples of the first meaning. *Амма мугъисалтрай дакI къадаркъусса Барзулавгу, Аъишатгу, жул душ ттигу чIивиссар тIий, ссавурданий бия* (*Амма mug'isaltrai dakIk"adark'ussa Barzulavgu, A'ishatgu, zhul dush ttigu chIivissar tIii, ssavurdanii biya*) [Guseynayev, 1967]. – *Barzulavu and Ajshat did not like matchmakers, and they said that their daughter is small.*

There are conventional combinations with the word *душ* (*dush*) in this sense, they reflect the outlook of the Laks to some extent. Thus, the words "grandson" and "granddaughter" are differentially expressed in Lak depending on whether they are children or daugh-

ters or sons: *душнил арс* (*dushnil ars*) – "son of the daughter", *душнил душ* (*dushnil dush*) – "daughter of the daughter", *арснал арс* (*arsnal ars*) – "son of the son", *арснал душ* (*arsnal dush*) – "daughter of the son". The fact is that in the Lak family children of the son enjoy special status, as they are successors, and children of the daughter already belong to another family.

Lak daughter is complaisant, she should listen to all of the parents, since they take important decisions for her. In our view, it can be traced by literal translations of the expressions: *душнин бишин* (*dushnin bishin*) (literally "to put daughter") – to adopt, *душ шчар булун* (*dush shchar bulun*) – to marry daughter off.

Analogue of the meaning "daughter" we find in the English word *girl*: ***I must have been a horrid little girl*** [Collins Cobuild Advanced Learner's English Dictionary].

English daughter is often very devoted to her father, in comparison with other family members, which is reflected in the expression *daddy's girl*.

Child in the family is the pride of parents, whether it's a boy or girl, which is reflected in stable phrases *That's my boy!* and *That's my girl!* (used during the presentation).

Unlike the Lak language, English has no categorical opposition of children of the son to children of the daughter, except for the rare cases when it is of focus. The most frequent lexemes are *granddaughter*, *grandson*, *grandchildren*.

The equivalent of Lak expression *душ цар булун* (*dush shchar bulun*) is the English *to marry off one's girl*, namely, "to find a husband for daughter" [Ibid].

At first glance, this similarity suggests the similarity of cultures, however, if this method of searching of the chosen at Laks is practiced to this day, it outlived itself in English (wider – Western) culture, that did not fail to be reflected in the language – *to marry off* now can be found except for the classical works.

Proceed to the second meaning of the word *душ* – "girl, lady": *МахIачкъалаливсса Буйнаксккаллал КичIираву ца шама къюкъю-жагыл ур ца исвагъисса душнихун бахчилай* (*MakhIachk'alalivssa Buinakskkallal kIichIiravu tsa shama k'yuk"u-zhag'il ur tsa isvag'issa dushnikhun bakhchilai*) [Aminov, 1967, 134]. – Three young people accost a young beautiful lady at the Buinakskaya street in Makhachkala.

Unmarried girl at Laks – this is a special social category, which is characterized by their rules and traditions

that could not be reflected in idioms and proverbs. Youth and inexperience in worldly matters are reflected in the idiom *бикъавсса душ* (*bik'avssa dush*) – the girl that did not reach maturity (literally "immature girl").

As soon as she reaches a certain age, there has been conversations about her marriage, and if the stereotype of the Lak man is an image of a strong and courageous mountaineer, the image of the girl in the Lak consciousness is associated with beauty. Everything is perfect, as is well-known, requires attention and sensitivity, that in relation to the female sex is transferred by the idiom *душил хъириу излан* (*dushnil kh'iriv izlan*) – care for the girl (literally "walk the girl").

The next step is a formal declaration of intention to marry when the groom's parents "ask" the girl's parents, or, in Lak *аш дуцIан душнин* (*a'sh duchIan dushnin*) – to betroth, to present a gift at betrothal, then the girl is not recommended to leave the house, that is, actively participate in public life. This custom is reflected in terms *вивбивтсса душ* (*vivbivtssa dush*) (hist.) – the girl that was put in the house (literally, "the girl placed inside", i.e., a girl who was forbidden to leave the house after the engagement before marriage). However,

the latter is a relic of the past rather than a phenomenon of modernity, since modern Lak girl learns, works and, as a consequence, cannot long maintain a passive lifestyle.

In times of old there also was another possible method of marriage, where the girl was kidnapped, and then entered into the marriage and informed parents that imprinted in a phraseologism *душ бугъан* (*dush bug'an*) (ЛИХЪАН БАН (*likh'an ban*)) – "grab the girl" (to lead the girl) according to Dagestan tradition to create a family.

But the opposite was the fact that the girl is not married at all: *душнува личIаву* (*dushnuva lichIavu*) – "to stay single" (celibate life). This circumstance nowise welcomed, unmarried girl was considered an invalid member of the society, which is reflected in the Lak folklore.

The second meaning of the word *girl* in English as well as in Lak is "young or relatively young woman": ***Biddy was the wisest of girls, and she tried to reason no more with me*** [Dickens, 2008, 129].

However, unlike the Lak equivalent, this meaning has several submeanings:

- 1) a special young woman or a woman characterized by her work;
- 2) someone else's second half;

3) *hist.* a servant.

The first of these values is reflected in many idioms of the English language, among which we find *college girl*; *flower girl*; *principal girl* [Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary].

But the most illustrative in this series, in our opinion, is a combination *career girl*. This is a typical Western phenomenon, which became widespread in the 20th century, when there has been a surge in the feminist movement, women's rights to professional work, as opposed to the image of women-keepers of the hearth: ***The 31-year-old, who is set to make a comeback on I'm A Celebrity jungle, said she was ready to remind people of her metal as a working mum and career girl*** [Jordan says criticism makes her stronger].

Changes in social life could not but affect the language. If earlier a woman of a certain age, being unmarried, called *old made*, now increasingly used an expression *bachelor girl*: ***The term "old maid" is now seldom or never heard; the expression "bachelor girl" has taken its place*** [Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary].

As concerns the second submeaning, it is also more applicable to the English than Lak culture since free communication with the opposite sex before

marriage for Laks is not appreciated, while it is a commonplace for Western culture: *His girl eloped with an accountant* [Ibid].

An American idiom *one's best girl* could also be considered within this meaning: *If you are walking with your best girl and someone passes a slighting remark or uses improper language, won't you be ashamed if you can't take her part?* [Lewis, 1922].

Last of these submeanings – is a historic meaning for *servants*: *The Princess was, in fact, a servant girl from Devon called Mary Baker, born in 1791 to a poor family* [Collins Cobuild Advanced Learner's English Dictionary].

Consequently, by means of comparative analysis we have identified similarities and differences between Lak word *dyuu* (*dush*) and English *girl*. As it seems, these words describe the initial stage of the concept of a *woman*, and more fully this concept will be revealed further.

### Image of a mature woman in Lak and English

Certainly, Lak and English have many words that form the concept *woman*, but not all of them can pick up equivalents of the respective languages, while

the word *щарсса* (*shcharssa*) and *woman* differ in rich semantics, and common traits and differences between Lak and English culture are very well exemplified by them.

Thus, let's consider the word *щарсса* (*shcharssa*) in Lak. Its first meaning is "mature woman" as the opposite of young and inexperienced girls (*дуу* (*dush*)): *Гьунттиймур кьини, хьхьурай му щарсса дурккун дурр кьатIув, ялугьлан диркIун дур* (*G'unttiimur k'ini, kh'kh'urai mu shcharssa durkkun durr k'atIuv, yalug'lan dirklun dur*) [Gadzhieva, 2010, 15]. – *The next night the woman went outside and waited.*

Absolute synonymous with "щарсса (*shcharssa*)" in its first meaning is the word "хьамитайпа (*kh'amitaipa*)": *Нурият щаллагу Ккуллал райондалий бусравну ивкIсса дарзи Жамалов Къадал ва аслийсса зунттал хьамитайпалул РайхIанатлул душри* (*Nuriyat shchallagu Kkullal raiondalii busravnu ivkIssa darzi Zhamalov K'adal va asliissa zunttal kh'amitaipalul RaikhIanatlul dushri*) [Ramazanova, 2009, 24]. – *Nuriyat was the daughter of Jamal Kadalov, who was famous throughout the whole Kulinskiy, and of the respected woman mountaineer Rayganat.*

An interesting fact is that the word *woman* in Lak has plural form developed by truncating the basis of this noun *хъамитайна* (*kh'amitaipa*) – *хъами* (*kh'ami*), while lexeme *щарсса* (*shcharssa*) does not have own plural form.

In the first place of the dictionary entry in the *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary*, dedicated to *woman*, we find similar meaning: "a human being of female sex", i.e. woman unlike man: ***One morning, in the fall of 1880, a middle-aged woman, accompanied by a young girl of eighteen, presented herself at the clerk's desk of the principal hotel in Columbus*** [Dreiser, 1911].

Second meaning of the lexeme *щарсса* (*shcharssa*) is a "wife": ***Лас хъхъуниву цувалу ххуллийну кканнай уну, щарсса ганахун дахчуну дур, инавалумалагара, укун хъхъувайнияр, кIюрххицIун укканацIу, тIий*** (*Las kh'kh'univu tsuvalu khkhulliinu kkannai unu, shcharssa ganakhun dakhchunu dur, inavalu malagara, ukun kh'kh'uvainiyar, kIyurkhkhitsIun ukkanatsIu, tIii*) [Gasanov, 2010, 6]. – *When the husband of one night decided to go outside, his wife persecuted him: "Don't go out alone, it is better to go out in the morning, whether than leaving so late"*.

This meaning was listed second not by chance, i.e. precisely after the

meaning that characterizes a woman as a representative of the human race. The fact that the primary role of women at Laks is the role of wife, mistress and keeper of family happiness. Very often the word *щарсса* (*shcharssa*) in Lak transmits both meanings "woman" and "wife" at the same time, because in the old days existed an unwritten rule in the Lak society: every woman, as a rule, was to be married. A single woman raised suspicions, as it was considered by the society. And for the time being, according to the worldview of the Laks, a woman fully realizes itself only if she forms a family.

In Lak there is a number of idioms that characterize the ideal wife: *дири-къирусса щарсса* (*diri-k'irissa shcharssa*) – *fast, dexterous, agile woman*; *иминсса щарсса* (*iminssa shcharssa*) – *calm, balanced*; *исвагысса щарсса* (*isvag'issa shcharssa*) – *beautiful, graceful*; *итххявхсса щарсса* (*itkhkhyavkhssa shcharssa*) – *gifted, talented*.

Nowadays in English society the priorities are somewhat different. If earlier the fundamental role of a woman was to be housewife and mother, it has now become fancy an image of woman as socialite – a *woman of the world, business woman*.

Negative qualities of women in the Lak language are transmitted by phrases *лурзисса щарсса* (*lurzissa shcharssa*) – *dissolute woman*; *лянпIурсса щарсса* (*lyanpIurssa shcharssa*) – *glutton*; *магълусъсса щарсса* (*mag"lus"ssa shcharssa*) – *sneaky, dishonest woman*; *мукъуйх гъайсса щарсса* (*muk"uikh g'aissa shcharssa*) – *gullible woman*; *оъсса щарсса* (*o'ssa shcharssa*) – *bad, evil*; *тарсъсса щарсса* (*tars"ssa shcharssa*) – *stupid*; *чинлагъсса щарсса* (*chiplag'ssa shcharssa*) – *uncleanly*.

Special attention is given to the idiom *кIурчIу щарсса* (*kIurchIi shcharssa*) – *a divorced woman*. In Lak it does not simply state the fact of divorce, but also contains a negative connotation, as divorce is not encouraged at Laks. In English, the expression *divorced woman* says that a woman is not married, since the divorce for English society is common.

The meaning similar to *щарсса* (*shcharssa*)-*wife* also presented by English *woman*, but, unlike the Lak language, in this case, it is a subordinate under the colloquial style. In the *Collins Cobuild Advanced Learner's Dictionary* we find the meaning "wife, lover or life partner": ***I know my woman will never leave me*** [Collins Cobuild Advanced Learner's English Dictionary].

The meaning wife more fully transmitted to other English word *wife* or idiom *married woman*: ***Why should I assume he's having an affair with my wife?*** [Barnes, 1991].

If we talk about the non-dictionary meanings of the word *щарсса* (*shcharssa*), we can note the following: "a woman as a representative of a particular nation or locality": ***Вил хъунама уссийлгу оърус щарсса дурицуну, инагу гуржиричунан хъурча, ахъния ххяхханна, ттунма нава банна, дуняллий къадацIанна, тIий*** (*Vil kh"unama ussiilgu o'rus shcharssa duritsunu, inagu gurzhirichunan kh'urcha, akh'niya khkhyakhkhanna, ttunma nava banna, duniyallii k"adatsIanna, tIii*) [Guseinaeva, 2012, 27]. – *Your older brother is married to a Russian woman, and if you marry a Georgian, I commit suicide by jumping from a mountain.*

Such a complex cultural concept as *зунттал щарсса* (*zunttal shcharssa*) – *woman mountaineer*, – can be attributed to this case. The point is that this notion does not simply feature a toponimic fact, it carries a whole code of ethics, which is inherent in a woman mountaineer – honor, dignity, neatness, frugality, etc.

Moreover, Laks also judge a woman by birth of her ancestors – from what they district, villages, etc., because



different areas possess their own customs and traditions, as well as its own dialect: *Мукунма тий бия махъунмай нани ххулий ахттайнссаннуйн жу бувхсса ххулуцусса каферал заллу, ярущарсса, БацIадатусса ПатIиматгу* (*Mukunma tii biya makh'unmai nani khkhullii akhttainsannuin zhu buvkhssa khkhullutsIussa kaferal zallu, yarushcharssa, BatsIadatussa PatIimatgu*) [Guseinaeva, 2010, 4]. – *The same said the hostess of the cafe where we stopped in for lunch on the way back – Avar (lit. Avar woman) Patimat from the village Batsada.*

Surprisingly, we find a similar meaning in the English word *woman*, but this time it was reflected in a dictionary entry "a woman associated with a particular place, activity, occupation": *The headmistress was an Oxford woman* [Collins Cobuild Advanced Learner's English Dictionary].

Despite the apparent generality of the last two meanings, in English a greater emphasis is made on education and citizenship, while in Lak an increasing emphasis is made on origin, belonging to a particular ethnic group or community.

To this meaning can be attributed idioms such as a *woman of pleasure*, *woman of the streets*, *woman of letters*. This meaning in English is closely re-

lated to the following – "a female representative of a particular company, organization or party"; the last meaning has not always existed, it appeared only with the acquisition of full rights of women, which has long been utilized only by men: *On Monday night I was honoured to be part of the BC Federation of Labour's women's rights forum during their biennial convention* [Gibbs].

Lak analogue of this meaning is missing.

Among colloquial meanings that are not reflected in the Lak language dictionaries, the worth noting are as follows: "an appeal to woman with the goal to humiliate her as a representative of the fair sex": *Ил, щарссай, къадикIу ина!* (*Il, shcharssai, k'adikIu ina!*) – Hey, woman, shut up!

The similar meaning may be found in English. The existence of this meaning can be correlated with the patriarchal way of life in European society, where women occupy a secondary position: *Hey, woman, get me a beer out of the fridge* [Peckham, 1999].

There are a number of idioms transmitting a similar meaning: *my good woman* – my dear (as a pejorative form), *the little woman*.

The latter meaning is very close to the following: "woman receiving a

cleaning charge or performing other household duties": *A cleaning woman who really gets into her job accidentally erased part of a work of art valued at \$ 1.1 million during her nightly duties at Berlin's Ostwall museum* [Abramovitch, 2011].

In our opinion, this meaning also reflects the social inequality in society, when it comes for women who are taking up the most menial job. One of the variations of this meaning is "female servant", "maid of honor", "personal maid serving her mistress", which for the time being is a historical relic in connection with social change in society.

Values "woman servant", "female companion" have no analogues in Lak, as well as conclusive meaning of the word woman: "the woman", in which *woman* is used solely with the definite article: *There is little of the woman in her* [Lingvo Universal].

The latter meanings clearly show the differences in the perception of women between Laks and British.

### Conclusion

In summary, based on oppositions of such kernel constituents of the concept *woman* as a *dyuu (dush)-girl*, *uapcca (shcharssa)-woman* in Lak and

English, we came to the following conclusions:

1. In respective pairs at the surface level of the concept, similar meanings were revealed due to the universalism of the latter, regardless of place of residence, race, women ethnicity, which were discussed.

2. Differences in pairs appeared in a detailed study of the deep levels of the concept, namely, culture and life of the Laks and the English. Thus, even if the meanings are equivalent to each other at first glance, they have different connotative characteristics.

3. Non-equivalent meanings by virtue of ethnic, historical, social and economic differences were also identified.

4. All of the above meanings form a portrait of Lak woman as a representative of the conservative, patriarchal culture, for which is a core role of a married woman, mistress, mother that combines qualities such as humility, wisdom and decency both in moral and material spheres. These characteristics also were considered fundamental for Englishwoman to a certain time, but as a result of social change today we have the stereotype of Englishwoman as a proactive, purposeful woman who seek equality with men in matters of family

and career. Lak woman image has also been changed. Modern Lak women receive higher education, strive to working in a specialty and be competent not only in the family, but also in their social ac-

tivities. But a certain period of time is required in order the cultural changes, being reflected in the concept, become reflected in the language that today, unlike English, in Lak is extremely rare.

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## Лингвокультурологические особенности концепта «женщина» в лакском и английском языках

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### Аннотация

В статье проводится сопоставительный анализ лакских и английских лексем, актуализирующих концепт «женщина». Данный концепт, являющийся одним из основополагающих для любой лингвокультуры, наиболее ярко иллюстрирует картину мира, присущую исследуемым культурно-языковым общностям. В ходе анализа поверхностного уровня концепта «женщина» в рассматриваемых языках наметились черты сходства, обусловленные влиянием патриархального уклада жизни. Глубинные уровни выявили существенные различия, продиктованные особенностями менталитетов, а также социально-историческими факторами.

### Ключевые слова

Концепт, женщина, значение, лингвокультура, лакский, английский.

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