

DYNAMICS OF THE CHARACTERISTIC “SENSE OF HUMOR” OF THE LINGUISTIC PERSONALITY TYPE “THE BRITISH QUEEN”

I.A. Murzinova

Department of Germanic and Romance Languages, the Institute of Foreign Languages,
Volgograd State Social-Pedagogical University (Volgograd, Russian Federation).
E-mail: imurzinova@yandex.ru

Abstract. The linguistic personality type having the characteristic of transformability, an assumption that “fixed” personality types are more sensitive to changes in the behavior of the prototype personalities than the “disperse” ones and, therefore, can transform faster, is put forward. This assumption is verified by studying the dynamics of the “having no sense of humour” characteristic attached to the Queen in the British society.

Keywords: axiological linguistics; cultural linguistics; linguistic personality type; linguistic concept; semantics; values; the British Queen.

In the current research in the field of linguistic conceptology (see eg. [1-4], etc.), attention of scientists focuses on the instability of such concepts as mental formations. They are studied not only in synchrony but also in the dynamics of their development. In the methodological aspect this tendency is reflected in the classification of concepts.

For example, M.V. Pimenova [3] singles out constantly relevant, irrelevant and variable (“floating”) concepts. “Relevant concepts are primary (key) concepts; irrelevant ones are secondary concepts, while “floating” concepts are those which become relevant or irrelevant periodically” [Ibid: 48]. Given that linguocultural personality type is an abstract mental formation, a kind of concept whose content is a linguistic personality [5], we can similarly talk about relevant and irrelevant linguocultural personality types. With the advent in the social life in the physical world of some new material objects and appearance of other realias, new ways of designating them come to existence which are sometimes completely new concepts and related new ideas, knowledge, associations, experiences, values, as well as people associated with these realias. In other words, new concepts are formed.

For example, the linguistic personality type “hacker” is associated in modern linguistic consciousness with the concept “computer” [6]. If the prototype person disappears from the social reality, the process of fading of the corresponding linguocultural personality type begins. This process can be very long, the extinct peronality type may remain quite relevant for a long time, but with the absence of a prototype person, that “life bar”, which “feeds” the personality type in people’s minds, will invariably disappear from the social conceptual continuum.

Thus, on the basis of the presence or absence in the public life of a society an actually existing personality prototype all linguistic personality types can be divided into two groups - the prototype ones (the prototype personality exists in reality in the life of society, in the physical world) and non-prototype ones (the prototype personality does not exist in the physical world). By definition non-prototype personality types may include all types of the fictitious characters (V.I. Karasik's term), for example, the personality type "American Superman" [7]. The examples of non-prototype personality types are multiple, including almost all the historical linguistic personality types (such as the type of a "grisette" in French linguoculture [8], the type of a "British colonial official" in English linguoculture [9], the type of a "Soviet saleswoman" in Russian linguoculture, etc.), and possibly some other fading personality types (V.I. Karasik's term).

As shown above, the concepts of linguistic personality types are in constant dynamics. Emphasizing their ability to transform, T.V. Startseva notes that "the flexibility of the associative component allows the personality type to enhance the existing notions with new parameters, which enables individual reconsideration of an object" [10: 7]. In the same vein, O.A. Dmitrieva [8] considers transformability to be one of the essential features of any linguocultural personality type.

It follows that the degree of relevance of the linguistic personality type is dependent, among other extralinguistic factors, on the communicative behavior of the prototype of the given personality type in the real (physical) world. We can assume that the personality types most sensitive to changes in the behavior of the prototype figures are character types *fixed* on the basis of associative criteria (our term, see [11]), especially if they represent vivid personality types (V.I. Karasik's term) and / or role models. Disperse linguistic personality types (our term. – *I.M.*), even if they have a real-life prototype, do not have the ability to such a rapid transformation by definition, since for some noticeable changes to appear in a linguistic personality type some qualitative changes are necessary in the behaviour of a large number of prototype figures, which is hardly possible.

The specificity of the linguistic personality type under study, the "British Queen" in the British language consciousness, consists in the fact that its prototype personality is just one real individual, ie. the ruling Queen Elizabeth II. In this paper, we analyze the dynamics of one particular characteristic of the linguistic personality type the "British Queen", "no sense of humour", as one of the brightest features of the personality type under study.

According to poll results (2009) the British highly appreciate the queen's individual qualities by utilitarian criteria, and first and foremost, the ability to represent with dignity Britain in the international arena. The criteria for moral traits of this personality type are subject to critical evaluation,

e.g. the British people have condemned the Queen's neglect of people's feelings, her indifference, coldness, stiffness, her detachment from her subjects, secrecy, lack of humor, the narrowness of outlook [11: 163].

The stereotypes about the excessive severity of facial features of the "British Queen", apparently, are the result of the communicative behavior of the ruling Queen Elizabeth II - it is closely monitoring the image of the crown and doing everything in her power to keep in people's mind a favorable opinion of the British monarchy. Messages similar to the following, published in the "Today screen" under the heading "We are not amused", periodically appear in the British press: "A Spitting Image scene poking fun at the Royal Family has been removed from a store window at the Queen's request. The Queen was not amused when Liberty's in London's West End used the puppets to portray Prince Andrew as Prince Charming, Fergie as Cinderella and Prince Edward as an ugly sister. A Liberty's staff member said: "We were told a phone call was made from the Palace saying the Queen was not happy and it had to come down". All that was left yesterday was a "display removed" sign [12]. - A scene from the movie parody "Spitting Image", which ridiculed the royal family, has been removed from store shelves at the request of the Queen. Neither was the Queen amused by a puppet show shown in the "Liberty" in London's West End, in which Prince Andrew (the Queen's second son, the Duke of York. - *I.M.*) was presented as a fairy-tale prince, Fergie (Sarah Ferguson, the wife of Prince Andrew. - *I.M.*) as Cinderella and Prince Edward (the third son of the Queen, Earl of Wessex. - *I.M.*) as Cinderella's ugly sister. An employee from the "Liberty" said: "We were told that there was a call from the palace and the Queen was unhappy, so I had to remove the play". The next day, it remains only to post "Presentation is canceled".

Despite the fact that the above episode as a whole reflects the British stereotype that Queen Elizabeth II has no sense of humour, their expectations associated with the manifestation of this quality are sometimes, to some extent, justified. Thus, in the traditional Christmas speech in 1992, addressed to his fellow citizens, the Queen said the following phrase: "1992 is not a year on which I shall look back with undiluted pleasure. In the words of one of my more sympathetic correspondents, it has turned out to be an *Annus Horribilis*". In this case, calling 1992 "the year of horror" ("*annus horribilis*" - a year of disaster or misfortune [13]), the Queen apparently resorted to allusions to the events described in the poem by John Dryden "*Anus Mirabilis*" (1666). Despite enthusiastic name Dryden dedicated this poem to the tragic events in 1666 in London (The Great Fire of London and the Great Plague), having sung it as time of getting rid of disasters through divine intervention (the first part of the poem is devoted to heroic battles of the English fleet in the war with Holland). Such an allusion is justified - the theme of "The Great Fire of London" in the poem "*Annus Mirabilis*" is

associated with a fire at Windsor Castle in 1992. Another possible allusion - to the monarch (King Charles II), mourning the woes which befell London: "Nor with an idle care did he behold; / (Subjects may grieve, but monarchs must redress.) / He cheers the fearful and commends the bold, / And make despairers hope for good success" (John Dryden. *Annus Mirabilis: The Year of Wonders*, 1666, Edition National, 2011). In other words, in a time of general grief the monarch has no right to lose heart, his task is to support and encourage the people, instilling into them the hope of a better future. Perhaps using irony when referring to serious, even tragic events for her family in 1992, the Queen made an attempt to protect herself and her people from the harsh reality. A.A. Gornostaeva highlights the protective function of humour saying that in the English linguoculture "ironic exaggeration in a difficult situation helps us to hide true feelings, such as fear and despair" [14: 41].

Of course, a single event change in the prototype personality's communicative behaviour is not enough to break the stereotypes about the linguistic personality type as a whole. Still, as observations show, the ruling Queen's communicative behaviour has recently undergone a series of changes in the part of its "comic" component, which will be discussed later.

As noted above, a repeated pattern of behaviour of the prototype personality can lead to the formation of a new stereotype in the minds of the representatives of a particular linguistic culture. As noted in a cultural dictionary by Adrian Rum, contemporary British collective consciousness attaches excessive seriousness not only to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, but to Queen Victoria as well. The famous phrase "We are not amused" was uttered as an expression of Queen Victoria's discontent over the fact that the court groom parodied her behavior. Nowadays it is ironically used to accentuate someone's high social status and is still associated today with no sense of humour [15: 298]. Emphasizing this feature of the ruling queen, British people changed the phrase "We are not amused" replacing the personal pronoun "we" with the impersonal "one", which is often the case in the speech of Queen Elizabeth II ("One is not amused"). Thus, the behaviour of modern Britain Queen influenced the formation of a new stereotype associated with Queen Victoria, which was perceived by contemporaries as a happy and cheerful monarch. Today, the British tend to think of the Victorian era as of a century of strict censorship rather than of a time of prosperity of the nation, and of Queen Victoria as of "a humourless, unsmiling queen" [Ibid]. This stereotype, in our view, can also be partially explained by the communicative behaviour of the British queen. We see that the *fixed* linguocultural personality type the "British Queen" undergoes constant transformation under the influence of the communicative behaviour of the ruling Queen as the only real-life prototype personality of the type under study.

Exploring the dynamics of the sign "no sense of humour" in the linguistic personality type the "British Queen" let's look at some statements

made by British people in which this feature is apparent. Here is a fragment of a most typical statement obtained in a survey conducted in 2009 [11], in which individual perceptions of personal qualities of Queen Elizabeth II can be traced:

She is very conservative, very straight-laced, hates change, very narrow-minded, cold, aloof, with no visible sense of humour (response of the informant).

Component and introspective analysis of the content of the words used by the informant to characterize the queen reveals a number of assessment semes (straight-laced - “excessively strict in behaviour, morality, or opinions” [16], narrow-minded - “having a biased or illiberal viewpoint; bigoted, intolerant, or prejudiced” [Ibid]) and leads us to a conclusion that such behaviour is frowned upon in the British linguoculture.

However, in the last few years in the newspaper discourse, which is particularly “sensitive” to any changes in the life of society, there is a new trend that may indicate the change the stereotype about the Queen’s inability to understand and appreciate humour. The origin of this trend owes much to what has become a world-renowned short film shown during the opening ceremony of the Olympic Games 2012 in London, in the filming of which Queen Elizabeth II participated along with the actor Daniel Craig who played the part of James Bond 007. In the film, James Bond, the famous superspy, consisting in the secret service of Her Majesty, is sent for an audience with the Queen at Buckingham Palace. In the palace he is followed by the Queen’s corgis Monty, Willow and Holly. When James Bond enters the study, Elizabeth II does not notice it at first, carefully reading the paper on the table. James Bond, trying to attract the attention of the Empress gently coughs. The Queen turns around and greets him with, “Good evening, Mr. Bond”. After this, two celebrities clamber aboard a helicopter. The helicopter then flies to the Olympic Park, where Bond and the Queen jump out, arriving outside the stadium just in time for the Queens big entrance onto the Olympic arena. In the editorial “In praise of... Elizabeth, the Bond girl”, published in the newspaper “The Guardian” on July 29, 2012, we find the following comment to this popular today video.

It also enabled a Diamond Queen to reveal a sense of humour hitherto hidden during her 60-year reign. Secure in her jubilee popularity, let's hope she dares to share it again.

Analysis of this text fragment containing the typically British stereotypes of the media about the Queen allows us, on the one hand, to talk about lack of any pronounced manifestations of a sense of humour in the Queen’s communicative behavior for the entire period preceding her parachuting into the Olympics, on the other - to talk about some dynamics of the investigated feature “no sense of humour”, which is likely to begin to change with the changing communicative behavior of the prototype personality. The friendly

tone of the above statement and its contents indicate the approval of manifestations of a sense of humor by the queen.

Here is another example, indicating the presence of some change in the perceptions of the Queen's sense of humour in the British society. In the article "Diary" (in the online version of "The Telegraph" of May 26, 2003) Alexander Chancellor quoted a British soldier who expressed his attitude to a short humorous poem written by Elizabeth II to her mother in the guest book at the castle of Mey:

I am so glad for the Queen that the recently discovered verse she once contributed to her mother's visitors' book in the Castle of Mey won such approval from the country's leading poets. For it was charming and humorous, especially the lines about the food: "We shall never forget, / Nor could ever repay / A meal of such splendour, / Repast of such zest / It will take us to Sunday / Just to digest".

In the above verse lines, comic effect is created by the Queen due to the dereliberate violation of the rules of communication - the rule of the truth of the statement and the rules of "non-overstatement" [17], which ensures the successful implementation by the Queen of a speech genre of joke. Note that for ironic communication queen used linguistic resources, while in the example above with the landing at the Olympic Stadium the strategy of irony was implemented by the comic communicative behaviour of the queen.

Interpretative analysis of the last two examples shows that British people evaluate the ironic communicative and verbal behavior of the queen positively as this type of behaviour is typical for the English linguistic culture in general.

Curiously, that Al Alvarez, a British poet, novelist and critic, described his attitude toward poetic debut of the Queen in the speech genre of joke as follows:

It shows a rather sweet side of her I would never have imagined <...> because when she appears in public, she has that disapproving air to her (article by Chenselora "Diary" ("Diary") in the newspaper "Telegraph" from May 26, 2003, URL: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/comment/personal-view/3591802/Diary.html>).

This statement is typical of a Briton, accustomed to consider the queen too serious a person with a disgruntled expression that often occurs in people who do not know and do not understand the jokes (the formation of such a stereotype was promoted by the "disapproving air" the Queen often has during official events). The fact that the Queen can write a poem, and even be joking, seems very surprising. At the same time, the critic commends the queen's poetic abilities, though it's clear that he is not so much impressed with them as with the manifestation of a sense of humor in the Queen's personality ("a rather sweet side of her").

Another British journalist, Ben Macintyre, in his article, "A Look at the Queen Elizabeth II during the Diamond Jubilee celebrations" ("A Look at Queen Elizabeth II in her Diamond Jubilee Celebration"), published in the "Times" on June 5, 2012 (URL: <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/news/world/a-look-at-queen-elizabeth-ii-in-her-diamond-jubilee-celebration/story-fnb64oi6-1226383787047>), also finds a sense of humor to the ruling Queen:

The Queen, it emerges, is actually very humorous, in a mordant, almost subversive way. She has spent a lifetime in strict, protocol-bound social situations, but enjoys nothing more than when these go wrong.

The word mordant, by means of which the speaker specifies a kind of sense of humour inherent in the Queen, is defined by dictionaries as (especially of humour) cruel and criticizing in a humorous way. All analyzed dictionaries of English say that the word is most often used to describe humour and is very often used in the expressions *a mordant sense of humour*, *mordant wit / humour*, *a mordant remark* and the like. To describe the Queen's sense of humour the informant uses the adjective "subversive" which is quite stable in the English language. In dictionaries this word is associated with the political context and not with a humorous one ("trying to destroy or damage something, especially an established political system" [18], "secret and intended to damage or destroy a government or an established system" [19]).

As another example of the type of humour described above, consider the following statement of Her Majesty's personal assistant and designer Angela Kelly (see "The Queen and I, by Her Majesty's PA" by Andrew Alderson in "The Telegraph" of December 9, 2007, URL: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/1571986/The-Queen-and-I-by-Her-Majestys-PA.html>):

I do worry about her and care about her. But we also have a lot of fun together. The Queen has a wicked sense of humour and is a great mimic. She can do all accents - including mine.

The personal assistant and designer of Elizabeth II in this example also indicates the presence of a specific type of humour in the Queen, a "wicked" one. In dictionary entries, this word is often cited as part of the expression "to have a wicked sense of humour", marked as informal and is defined as "behaving badly in a way that is amusing" [18], "playfully mischievous" [13], "slightly immoral or bad for you, but in an attractive way" [12], "slightly immoral but attractive and enjoyable" [19], etc. The component analysis leads us to the following set of semes that constitute the lexeme "wicked" in the above context: 1) a little immoral, bad, mischievous, 2) playful, 3) funny, amusing, 4) enjoyable [20].

So, now the British Queen, according to her compatriots, has a sense of humour in its ironic or even sarcastic, variety. M.M. Filippova, to investigate the similarities and differences of irony and sarcasm, notes that "the semantic field of these two concepts overlap and they relate to each other on

the principle of “less intensively expressed characteristic (irony)” - more intensively expressed characteristic (sarcasm)” [21: 117].

The following humorous response of Queen Elizabeth II to a child's question, “You would like to see Kate was born a boy or a girl?” (on the occasion of the upcoming births of Duchess of Cambridge Kate Middleton during the royal walks in the county of Cumbria) could illustrate this type of “slightly immoral” humor.

I don't think I mind but I would very much like it to arrive because I'm going on holiday soon! (“Daily Telegraph of July” 17, 2013, “Royal baby: 'I hope it comes soon because I'm going on holiday!' Says the Queen on visit to Cumbria” by Gordon Rayner).

The comic effect in this context is achieved by substitution of universal human values with personal “individualistic” values. Childbirth - the most important event in the life of the family, all members of which are looking forward to this event. The first part of the phrase (“I would very much like it to arrive”) is quite predictable - it is natural for a grandmother (or rather, a great-grandmother) to want her grandson (great-grandson) to be born soon. But, unexpectedly, the Queen completes the phrase with “...because I'm going on holiday soon!”, thus creating a joke by replacing the universal human value “a child birth is a great joy for the whole family” with an individualistic value “early birth is necessary for me personally so that I could go on holiday”.

Thus, we can state that the stereotype of the excessive severity of Queen Elizabeth II and, accordingly, the linguistic personality type the “British Queen”, the characteristics of which at present coincide with the characteristics of the ruling Queen, is undergoing some changes in the last decade under the influence of some new trends in the prototype person's (Queen Elizabeth II's) communicative behavior. The characteristic “lacking a sense of humor” begins to transform into “having a peculiar sense of humour”.

Summing up the results of our investigation we have come to the following conclusions.

1. Changes in the communicative behaviour of the prototype personality of a linguistic personality type can affect the corresponding characteristics of this type as a linguistic concept.

2. At the present stage of development of the linguistic personality type the “British Queen” one of its significant features, “lacking a sense of humour”, begins to transform into “having a peculiar sense of humor”.

3. The characteristic “presence / absence of a sense of humor” is important to assess the personality of the Queen by moral criteria, so a qualitative change in the linguistic consciousness of the British society can serve as an indicator of transformation of the *fixed* linguistic personality type the “British Queen”.

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