

FEMALE IMAGE IN THE MODERN RUSSIAN LANGUAGE BLOG

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Abstract. The article considers female image in the Russian language blog from the point of view of its metaphorical conceptualization. Metaphorical modeling of the female image in a personal female blog is considered as self-identification mechanism in the text activity. The basic metaphorical models, which represent the ideas of female appearance in the texts of Russian-language female blogs, are revealed and described in the current research.

Keywords: blog sphere; Russian language blog; conceptual metaphor; metaphorical model; female image.

In the course of the development of information and telecommunication technologies, transformation of the structure of communication processes is observed in modern society. As a matter of fact, it influences the formation of social and cultural identity. The debates about whether Internet communication creates new personalities or simply helps a person to see themselves from different angles, to identify their sub-personalities have long been conducted in the literature on the “digital culture” [1]. Reflection of different aspects of self-identification is not unique to researchers, but also for Internet users: “I went from being one person with single name to existing as a number of identities created by Me, but not always recognizable as me, even by myself” - says Sue Thomas in his study [2: 9].

Internet communication makes it possible to escape from the social constraints that are present in real communication due to the indirect technological interactions in the Internet environment. The physical side of communicants in the actual direct communication (e.g., chat rooms, newsgroups) is hidden from direct observation. The speaker is present in the form of a virtual equivalent - a sign of personality, modeled themselves. We believe it is anonymity that can overcome social, psychological and other barriers in the Internet communication. The user is also able to control and change the identity that he / she activates in virtual environment. The communicative Internet environment is carried out in the visual-verbal form. Other parameters of the natural communication remain outside the channels of communication; therefore, they need to be modeled. A person can become what he or she will never be in reality, or what he has always wanted to be. Creating an image of the “self” in virtual reality, a person gets the possibility to present any of his / her side, any of his / her “I”. In connection with this modeling,

activities of communicants to create their own image are updated. Despite the fact that the development of communication technology expands the range of modeling capabilities, verbal behavior and the formation of the verbal image still remain basic.

Thus, speech in communicative environment of the Internet carries out two major functions: the actual communicative function aimed at the implementation of social communication, and the function of social-psychological modeling - the formation of one's own socio-psychological image in communication. Verbal modeling is based on modeling the potential of natural language. Such understanding of the language is presented in the framework of the concept of modeling systems, "according to which natural languages, mythology, religion, literature and art, as well as socioethical norms (prohibitions and regulations) are sign systems that display (model) certain fragments of reality and as a result of the operation beget product (sign sequence, i.e. texts in a semiotic sense of the word) that implement the communicative and cognitive capabilities of individual semiotics..." [3: 77].

The Internet communication environment enables the study of verbal behavior in new communication conditions and allows you to observe how verbal modeling of an image of a communicant is carried out. Due to the fact that we are primarily interested in spontaneous social interaction, focused on self-presentation of the individual in this communication environment, we refer primarily to such area of noninstitutional communication as blogosphere.

Blog genre, appearing in the early 90s of the 20th century, by the mid-90s was massively spread and gained great popularity. Initially, the blog is formed and functions as an online diary - technologically arranged space for private records, reporting significant events for a single user, showing some events and phenomena.

In the personal experiences of the authors there is often an attempt at self-examination, where he / she (the author) goes through it to recognize his / her true "I".

For example, Maria Mishina under the name "Red" wrote: *"I remember there was a period in my life that lasted for a month - the month of snot and heartache. I was walking around the apartment, stumbling over my own broken heart, and falling apart from self-pity. Reflection in the mirror looked at me maliciously and swore obscenities. I wrote down everything I wanted to say, everything that had accumulated as black burden. And then I got up and went to take it "to the post office" - nearest trash can in the street... "Well-done-reflection" was looking forward to me at home. Having opened a bottle of wine, we celebrated my release"* [4].

However, despite proximity to a diary genre, the blog significantly differs from it in publicity parameter: the Internet environment is primarily a communicative space, and the user who posted a message here under-

stands that he / she will be read, even if he / she does not count on a specific addressee.

Therefore, the names “Internet diary” and “online diary” are conditional with respect to this genre. The author of a message writes for a reader and can also be the reader of other messages, forming, thus, the system of communicative acts, social environment, and the special type which received the name “blogosphere”.

The main function of the blog is self-presentation: “on-line diary” creates certain individual space for self-expression. The Blog is a personal page, where personal information is stored with the full range of emotions and feelings put up for public display. This type of communication is capable of creating a response - network users can quote the author of the blog, can leave their comments and observations, subsequently, the author of the blog can see how popular he / she is, how interesting “his / her role is”.

A number of researchers (E. Thompson, K. Bert, A. Orłowski) point out that women and teenage girls traditionally have blogs of a diary character. A recent study by Herring proved that, despite the fact that gender-based bloggers are evenly distributed (by fifty percent), “personal blogs” are conducted exclusively by women [5]. Thus, it is the female blog of diary character where we can observe options of modeling of an individual and personal female image. Compiling settings of a self-image in the text of the blog, valuable reference points and preferences allow the reconstruction of the key parameters of a female image of Russian blogosphere representatives. Texts of female blogs are relatively spontaneous speech works, which reflect the private, everyday ideas of the world, life, certain events or phenomena and, therefore, represent a “naive” female image.

Earlier we mentioned that speech production in the Internet discourse activates verbal modeling techniques based on modeling the potential of natural language. One of the oldest mechanisms for creating models of verbal acts is a metaphor. Modern research in the field of the metaphor theory has changed the view on this phenomenon: the metaphor is interpreted as a cognitive mechanism, which is based on the principle of analogy and frequently used in cognitive processes [6-9]. Metaphorical models form a specific layer of the conceptual and linguistic picture of the world, reflecting the uniqueness of a particular worldview of representatives of certain culture and language. The creative side of the human mind transforms his / her view of reality. Experience of interaction of the world and thinking is reflected in the language level. Being a verbal thinking tool, the metaphor creates the system of images and allows you to reflect on the experience. Following the founders of the theory of the conceptual metaphor J. Lakoff and M. Johnson [6], we define the conceptual metaphor as a basic mental model based on an analogy, which helps us to conceptualize objects (phenomena, entities) on the basis of knowledge of other objects (phenomena, entities). It obtains ex-

pression in the language, discourse, and the text in the form of an integrated system of metaphorical expressions. Due to the fact that conceptual metaphor belongs to the cognitive sphere, its implementation in the language is referred to as a metaphorical model that combines a system of speech representatives - textual metaphors.

It is "the ability to actualize non single-line associative connections within the entire scope of complexly organized frame of the sphere source of a metaphorical naming" that enables the basic linguistic metaphors act as textual metaphors. "Textual metaphor is a variant of implementation of the basic language metaphor, embodying part of its imaginative capacity in specific lexical representations", claims Z.I. Rezanova [8: 20]. The complexity of the organization and the similarity to the basic metaphor allows textual metaphor to structure the meaning of all of the text as a whole or its fragment.

Basis for the understanding of conceptual metaphor in contemporary cognitive science was laid by many domestic and foreign researchers (N.D. Arutyunov, A.N. Baranov, A. Barcelona, A. Vezhbizkaya, M. Johnson, Yu.N. Karaulov, E. Cassirer, J. Lakoff, A.P. Chudinov, J. Zinken, etc.).

In our research, the system of textual metaphors representing certain parameters of a female image is considered as a metaphorical model based on conceptual metaphor. It is assigned a special place as it plays an important role in the formation of associative links, unity and differences between the phenomena of the world. Conceptual metaphors create new individual meanings on this basis that express the individual's subjective attitude to the world, his / her thinking and interpretation of a particular object of reality. It is included in the process of learning and reflection of reality in the language. Therefore, we can say that it has a gnosiological status. Thus, metaphor is a linguistic reflection of the occurring cognitive processes, as well as the key element in the conceptualization and categorization of reality.

The system of conventional conceptual metaphors is not realized: "we often think or function automatically in everyday activities according to certain schemes" [6: 387]. The essence of conceptual metaphor "is understanding and experiencing one kind of phenomena in terms of the phenomena of another kind" [Ibid: 389]. Conceptual metaphors are cognitive models which form ideas about anything, including ideas about a woman, her appearance, psycho-emotional structure of the personality, behavioral practices, etc. Studying metaphorical concepts, formation of metaphoric models, and creation of metaphors themselves helps us to understand the nature of human thinking, his / her activities, his / her "language picture of the world". Thus, "metaphorical modeling is a means of comprehension that reflects national, social and personal identity, and also means of categorization, submission and evaluation of a fragment of reality with the help of scripts, frames and slots belonging to a completely different conceptual field" [7: 238].

Methodology for identification of conceptual metaphors was offered by G. Lakoff and M. Johnson in their famous work "Metaphors we live by". In the works of A.P. Chudinov [7] and Z.I. Rezanova and her followers [10], this technique has been supplemented by the achievements of the lexical-semantic analysis developed in the domestic linguistics.

In the paper of A.P. Chudinov there is a hierarchical system of metaphorical models of different levels of generalization. The author identifies four main categories of metaphors: anthropomorphic (in the study of this category of metaphors we analyze concepts that relate to the original conceptual areas as "Anatomy", "Physiology", "Disease", "Sex", etc.); naturamorphic (conceptual realm of "Animal World", "World of Plants", "World of inanimate nature", etc.); sociomorphic (spheres "Crime", "War", "Game and Sports", etc.) and artifact ("Tools", "Computer World", "Cutlery", etc.). Categories of metaphors can be schematically represented by the following schemes: "Man as the center of the universe", "Man and Nature", "Man and Society" and "Man and the results of his work". Chudinov also considers subtypes of the metaphors that may relate to these four categories: phyto-morphic metaphors (conceptual sphere "plants"), zoomorphic ("animals"), ontological metaphors (the representation of inanimate objects as living beings), orientational (based on the spatial relationships "top-bottom" "more-less", etc.), criminal (conceptual realm of "crime", "thieves", "criminals", etc.) and morbid (sphere "disease").

We have chosen this system as a reference during nomination of the metaphoric models that form a female image in the texts of women's blogs. This paper considers the metaphorical models which form such parameter of the female image *as appearance*.

The current research [11] and our analysis show that a woman herself occupies a central place in a personal blog: she describes her life, creativity, posts photos, etc. One of the most frequent themes in these blogs is the theme of beauty, health and, of course, appearance. "Men love with their eyes", - says the well-known saying. Therefore, a natural need to look attractive is the goal of many women. If nature has not bestowed you with a special beauty, the desire to change it is reflected in the records of women's online diaries.

Having analyzed the "blogosphere of RuNet (Russian segment of the Internet)", we found several metaphorical models of women's appearance.

At this stage of our research we can claim that the metaphors which simulate aspects of the external appearance of women on the basis of the conceptual realm of "Natural Beauty" are the most frequent in the texts of women's blogs. Different kinds of natural objects related to phyto- and zoosphere get in the focus of metaphors creation.

The stable linguistic metaphor identifying conceptually a woman and a plant functions most frequently in the texts of women's blogs. More often

woman's appearance, her shape and, indirectly, her personal parameters are revealed through a model A WOMAN IS A FLOWER. The variety of shapes and colors of flowers allows modeling a variety of types of female beauty metaphorically. In one of her records "Standards of Beauty", the author of the blog *Milady-S* says, referring to the author of the original text by Tatiana Malezhik [12]. *Throughout the ages, men admired women by their beauty and intelligence, strength and tenderness. But people of different countries understand the ideal of female beauty in very different ways. Someone likes delicate fragrance of lilies, but someone is crazy about sharp thorns of a rose... Simple field flowers can be dearer for this one, while others feel the need for constant contemplation of unusual exotic orchids. So many men, so many minds, yet still during all the centuries there have been own standards of beauty that remain relevant to this day* [13].

Text metaphors "delicate fragrance of lilies", "sharp thorns of roses", "simple wild (field) flowers" and "exotic orchids" are metaphors of phyto-morphic type, where the conceptual sphere of the "plants", "flowers" combines metaphors into a single unit, into the metaphorical model "A woman is a flower".

In this passage of the text, the author of the blog compares the feminine beauty with the beauty of different flowers, which reflect not only the nature of women: a lily - cold, hard, silent, gentle and mysterious; sharp thorns of roses - swift, sharp, without complexes, bright, temperamental; wild flowers - homely, simple, small, modest; exotic orchid - mysterious, mystical, secretive, elegant, etc.; but also create a metaphor with the national colors.

The "**delicate fragrance of lilies**" metaphor actualizes not only visual but also olfactory signs of flower forming synaesthetic image of the "difficult", at the same time cold and sensitive, beautiful and dangerous woman. Lily allows you to transfer the image of a female aristocrat with a pale face, strewn with freckles, with a thin, slightly lean figure and urbane, cool and concealing emotions.

The metaphor "**sharp thorns of roses**" actualizes the model "a woman is a rose", but focuses on the danger posed by such a woman. On the one hand, a rose is a beautiful and elegant flower that symbolizes love passion, on the other is potentially dangerous because thorns growing on the rose's stem can injure your hands. Notions about the rose model the image of the beautiful, but impertinent and proud person that is inaccessible and able to inflict emotional injury. But this is what attracts men.

The metaphor "**unusual exotic orchids**" models another image of an unusual woman. This image is also ambivalent: on the one hand, there is the image of a beautiful exotic woman, African or Asian, who differs from other women because of her unusual beauty, mysticism. The author of the blog cannot come to some kind of consensus, "Feminine beauty is a mystery of

nature because it is impossible to determine a perfect woman in every sense of the word, there are different ideals for all people”.

Another female character is formed by the metaphor “**simple wild-flowers**”. This is a modest woman, without bright beauty and appeal, she does not attract men’s attention, but adorns this world so as she can. A wild flower is an ordinary flower that grows in the field, so it is not remarkable and easy to find. In this case, the nomination of a flower is not in appearance, but in the place of origin. That is already represented by the multiplicity, non-personal objects of this type. Equating a woman with a flower of the field, the author emphasizes metaphorically that it is not remarkable, ordinary, and banal.

In general, the metaphoric model A WOMAN IS A FLOWER consistently implements a positive assessment of the female image in the diversity of its variants. We believe that it is connected with the general positive esthetic and ethical evaluation of the bloomers. The text implementation of this model shows that bloggers differentiate objects of the conceptual sphere “Flowers” in different ways: cultural bloomers are called, as a rule, by specific names: a lily, a rose, an orchid, uncultivated, growing in the natural environment are referred to as the generic name of flowers and marked by the place of its origin.

Another stable and consistently implemented model based on the conceptual field of “Natural Beauty” - is a model A WOMAN IS AN INSECT. In most of the cases people are attracted by butterflies and dragonflies from the diversity of insects to describe a female image, which corresponds to the current model in the language and culture. The metaphor of the butterfly is a multidimensional and in a sense symmetric: if we turn to the inner form of the nomination of the Russian word “*babochka*”, we find its derivation from the noun “baba” - one of the naming of women in the Russian language. It can be assumed that this nomination of the insect is related to both parameters of the external appearance: the butterfly is one of the most beautiful insects, and the projection of life and its reproductive cycles: we call the insect “a butterfly” when it is in the reproductive phase, i.e. the butterfly is able to bear children - to lay larvae. As a rule, metaphorical naming of women by “the butterfly” is associated with the actualization of such features as beauty and lightness. The author of the blog about health and beauty *Anna* writes: *How can you metamorphose from a caterpillar into a butterfly? According to one version the diet was made by the Italian woman Giulia Mario Rossi. Her father, who was a professor entomologist, bred butterflies in his greenhouse. Julia suffered from childhood obesity. Within six months she was able to get rid of 23 kilograms of excess weight. Impressed by her success, Julia named the diet as “Farfalla”, associating her metamorphosis from a chrysalis into a butterfly, i.e. literally flit like a butterfly, to feel the lightness and airiness* [14].

However, the authors of the blogs demonstrate that the butterfly image which is used to model the female image includes representations of the life cycle of the insect as a whole. For example, *Bonnie_Zemn* writes: Dreaming **to flit** into Antalya heat **like a spectacular butterfly**, I **lie as a larva** on the couch and **gorge**, gorge and gorge [15]. A general range of topics of the *Bonnie_Zemn*'s blog is a weight loss and desire to have a perfect figure. The author of the blog interprets her own image with a little irony, using concepts of the butterfly, but contrasting two stages of development of this insect: *a butterfly* and *a larva*. The first metaphor reflects the stereotypical, general cultural idea of a female-butterfly as a perfect object - "**to flit** into Antalya heat **like a spectacular butterfly**", where the main parameter is the harmony and lightness. The second metaphor refers to another stage of the life of this insect - to the larva - and projects its basic parameters (I **lie as a larva** on the couch and **gorge**, gorge and gorge) on the image of a woman's life. The larva is this phase of development of the butterflies which is unpleasant for people in terms of appearance and lifestyle. Thus, we observe a play on the image of the butterfly for the ironical characteristic of their own way of life and appearance.

We can observe another example of the implementation of the textual metaphorical model A WOMAN IS AN INSECT in a number of blogs. For example, *Tatiana* writes in her blog: *Why are we taught from the childhood that we have to "fight for our happiness" and that "to live a life it's not the same as to cross a field" that, in general, "life is a hard thing"? We make it difficult ourselves when we think so, but the group was adamant:.) They even compared me with the **Dragonfly** from the fable :) And I don't understand that if my destiny is to be the **Dragonfly**, then why I should become the **Ant**?* [16].

In this case the author appeals to the stable metaphorical opposition that exists in the Russian culture that for the first time was given in the text of the fable by I.A. Krylov "The dragonfly and the ant". However, Krylov's fable punctuated social rather than a gender perspective. The Dragonfly and the Ant are opposed primarily on the basis of their attitude to life, to work in terms of social utility. But perhaps because of the grammatical distinction we also can trace a gender in this opposition: the word "a dragonfly" has feminine gender and therefore is associated with a woman. In this case, the woman is frivolous, not serious and unstable: "A fidget Dragon-fly. All the summer's gaily singing, Of the future isn't thinking, But the winter's nearby". With a light hand of Krylov, a "dragonfly" behavior gets a negative assessment in the Russian culture, but there is a contradiction between this negative assessment, punctuated in this image and a positive assessment of the a female image as a light, flying creature (compare "butterfly"). This ambivalence allows the author of the blog to express the duality of a modern female image: a modern woman, burdened with many problems, often cannot afford to have "dragonfly lightness". Perhaps the author of the blog believes or

hopes that this image is able to give her power of flight, carefree and fun. That is why the author does not want to become “the ant”, though he is the symbol of diligence, but also is a gender opposite, the carrier of masculinity. Then the author writes: “...if you focus on your talents and not on the shortcomings and weaknesses, then your life becomes brighter, easier, more interesting...”. This is the reason why the author does not want to work hard and think ahead, because such an image is associated with the insect “ant”.

Thus, the metaphorical interpretation of the feminine on the basis of the conceptual realm of “Insect” emphasizes parameters such as beauty, lightness, ability to fly, elegance, uniqueness. We believe that the scope of the metaphorical interpretation involves other objects of this conceptual sphere, which is typical for the Russian language picture of the world as a whole (e.g., a bee, a wasp waist, buzzing, etc.), but at the current stage of the work similar metaphors are not found in the texts of blogs.

The conceptual sphere “An animal” and, accordingly, the metaphorical model “A WOMAN IS AN ANIMAL” is actively involved in the metaphorical conceptualization. At the same time analyzing the texts we haven’t found metaphorical units directly nominating any animal, more frequently metaphorical units nominate individual features peculiar to animals. For example, a blogger under the name *lissarone* writes a letter to the Father Frost: *Hair Removal. Grandpa, do you know how painful it is? Interminable civil war with your own hair over the entire surface of the body other than the head - it's unbearable. Give us, please, the device that deletes all the unwanted hair quickly and painlessly, or introduce the fashion of **furry women*** [17].

The blogger identifies hair covering of a woman with thick fur of an animal. The fur of the animal as a separate phenomenon gets a positive evaluation in the culture, as it helps to survive: protects from the cold in the cold weather and from overheating in hot one, in addition, it has long been used for decoration. But for the person and, in particular, for women hair covering is taken as a sign that resembles an animal, and therefore women tend to avoid that “fur”. If a woman has lost the “war with hair”, she becomes “hairy”, i.e. loses her appeal and looks similar to an animal.

On the other hand, there is an indication of animals which is desirable for women. In the blog post named “Hair loss. My methods of the struggle”, a certain *Madlen* writes: *Three months ago I used three products of the brand Siberian Health, I have already written about them, but again, they well stimulated my hair growth, a **fluff** appeared **on my head***. In response to this entry *Natel* writes: *Of course, some funds have helped, still I use two or three, but I haven't acquired **luxurious mane**... alas... ((((((([18].*

With the general negative attitude of women to the presence of hair on the body, there is a part of the body which must be covered with hair. That is our head. Thus, the longer and thicker hair grows the better. That is why good, thick hair on the head of a woman is metaphorically identified with a

mane - a hair covering on the same part of the body of some animals - horses, lions. These animals are aesthetically valued positively, they are considered to be truly beautiful and comparison with them (or with part of them) is a positive feature.

Besides metaphorical projections of the natural world cosiomorphic metaphors can be used for the characterization of modeling the female image. Difficulty in determining this type of metaphorical conceptualization is in the vicinity of this phenomenon to the metonymic models, as basic conceptual realm of the realm-source of the metaphorical nomination and realm-target is the same - "The Man". In this case, the female image is modeled by using the social action naming, not peculiar to the representatives of the gender type, namely - military sphere. Let us refer to the context: *Hair Removal. Grandpa, do you know how painful it is? Interminable **civil war with your own hair** over the entire surface of the body other than the head - it's unbearable. Give us, please, the device that deletes all the unwanted hair quickly and painlessly, or introduce the fashion of furry women* [17].

The metaphor "civil war with hair" should be attributed to the military metaphor, according to the classification of A.P. Chudinov [7]. In this case, the removal of hair is viewed through the prism of the frame structure "war": the attacker and the winner here is a person and the loser is hair covering. The author's application contains a request for weapons (Give us, please, the **device** that **deletes** all the unwanted hair quickly and painlessly) or a change in the situation, when the war would not be needed (introduce the fashion of furry women). If we consider the definition of the word "civil war", we find that this is a "war between groups within a state, the takeover of the country". Thus, the struggle with excess hair on a body is transformed into a "war for survival", a war between groups within a state - the body. Here the woman acts as a "warrior" who fights with part of her body and wins. But due to the fact that she fights with inhuman an "animal" sign is evaluated positively. However, apart from the position of the warrior, fighting with hair on the body, the woman takes another social position concerning hair on the head: it is a position of a defender and a helper. For example: *when the hair grows dim, use a hair mask. We need to help our hair; vegetable oil protects hair from damage, creating a protective film on the hair covering; at least once a week (and in some cases even more) it is necessary to pamper your skin with intensive care.*

Thus, having analyzed the records of female authors of blogs we can conclude that conceptual metaphors of naturamorphic type with conceptual spheres "an animal", "a plant", "nature" are dominated. Animate and inanimate nature has long served as a source of human analogies, some model, according to which a person imagines social reality, thereby creating a linguistic picture of the world.

Our observations show that commonplace categorization is present in the vast majority of conceptual metaphors describing women's appearance in

the women's blogs. This is due to the fact that bloggers aim to show their own feelings and experiences, reveal their own vision of the world, including the female image.

Self-identity and identification of the role that bloggers create and “play”, depend on many aspects: the particular life situation, the age - teenagers mostly write about their appearance, about their attitude to other people, about their emotional experiences about it. Thus, we can talk about creating the individual textual metaphors based on metaphorical models.

In this connection we should note modeling or schematized function of the metaphor, which allows you to model a particular unique phenomenon, or the situation on the basis of a common language picture of the world.

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