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## STEREOTYPICAL IDEAS IN ENGLISH JOKES: GENDER ASPECT

*Of particular interest to linguists are linguistic and social phenomena and their interaction. At present, the issue of the influence of gender stereotypes on the judgments and behavior of individuals is acute in society. Gender stereotypes are ideas about how men and women behave as certain social types in certain situations. Public consciousness has images of men and women, based on stereotypes that have developed over the centuries. These stereotypes extend to infants, although they have not yet managed to acquire sociocultural-significant male or female traits. Debatable is also still the question in society's views on the social purpose of men and women, their inequality in social, legal status and the causes of this inequality. The question of differences between men and women remains relevant, that is, the degree of influence of various factors on existing differences in the abilities and behavior of the sexes. Thus, stereotypes are considered as special forms of information processing, helping a person to reduce complex connections to simple ones and navigate the world around him. Gender stereotypes are thoughts about the attributes of articles, about their qualities. Gender stereotypes are socially and culturally conditioned, they are fixed in language and firmly fixed in the public consciousness.*

*This article is devoted to the study of stereotypical ideas about gender in English-language jokes. The subject of this article is the peculiarities of gender stereotypes in the modern world. The material for the study were examples of English-language jokes. Within the framework of the work, an attempt is made to consider what the concept of «sexism» is. During the study, the author used contextual and comparative analyses.*

*The significance of this article lies in the possibility of using specific linguistic material considered in the study to further analyze social roles and correct incorrect gender stereotypes.*

**Key words:** *gender, stereotypes, inequality, jokes.*

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## СТЕРЕОТИПНІ УЯВЛЕННЯ В АНГЛОМОВНИХ ЖАРТАХ: ГЕНДЕРНИЙ АСПЕКТ

*Особливий інтерес для лінгвістів представляють мовні та суспільні явища та їх взаємодія. На тепер у суспільстві гостро стоїть питання впливу гендерних стереотипів на судження і поведінку індивідів. Гендерні стереотипи – це уявлення про те, як поводяться чоловіки і жінки як певні соціальні типи в тих чи інших ситуаціях. Громадська свідомість має образи чоловіків і жінок, виходячи зі стереотипів, що склалися століттями. Ці стереотипи поширюються і на немовлят, хоча ті ще не встигли придбати соціокультурно-значущі чоловічі чи жіночі риси. Дискусійним є також питання про погляди суспільства на соціальне призначення чоловіків та жінок, їхню нерівність у соціальному, правовому статусі та причини цієї нерівності. Актуальним залишається питання відмінностей між чоловіками та жінками, тобто про ступінь впливу різних факторів на існуючі відмінності в здібностях та поведінці статей. Таким чином, стереотипи розглядаються як особливі форми обробки інформації, що допомагають людині зводити складні зв'язки до простих і орієнтуватися в навколишньому світі. Гендерні стереотипи – це думки про атрибути статей, про їх якості. Гендерні стереотипи соціально та культурно обумовлені, вони фіксуються у мові та міцно закріплюються у суспільній свідомості.*

*Дана стаття присвячена вивченню стереотипних уявлень про гендер в англomовних жартах. Предметом розгляду даної статті є особливості гендерних стереотипів у сучасному світі. Матеріалом для дослідження стали приклади англomовних жартів. В рамках роботи робиться спроба розглянути, що з себе представляє поняття «сексизм». В ході дослідження автор використовував контекстуальний та порівняльний аналізи.*

*Значення цієї статті полягає у можливості використання конкретного мовного матеріалу, що розглядається у дослідженні, для подальшого аналізу соціальних ролей та корекції неправильних гендерних стереотипів.*

**Ключові слова:** *гендер, стереотипи, нерівність, жарти.*

**Formulation of the problem.** The problem of interaction between language and social phenomena have attracted the attention of linguists for a long time (Shestakov V., 1982, Annen D., 1994). One of its most interesting aspects is the reflection in speech and the imposition by means of speech of male and female stereotypes of everyday consciousness, largely determined by the position of women in society. Such stereotypes are sometimes invisible and completely normal and acceptable to others, so they are not perceived as something extraordinary. Great influence have language stereotypes and linguistic sexism, which are designed to educate consciousness and perception of life by new generations.

**Analysis of recent research and publications.** Social stereotypes as one of the most interesting and

indifferent spheres in the functioning of society for centuries have been studied by many researchers, such as S. Oksamitna, V. Ageeva, I. Con, J. Scott, W. Lippman, A. Martyniuk, T. Litvinova, L. Guk, G. Magradze, P. Vlasov, G. Voynich, etc. However, the relevance of the article is determined by its anthropocentric orientation, which is fully consistent with modern trends in domestic linguistics and the need to accumulate practical and theoretical material for studying and solving the problem of the manifestation of sexism, and also in the disclosure of gender stereotypes.

**The purpose of the research** is to study the phenomenon of «linguistic sexism» in nominative units of the English language, which was selected from the texts of modern English-language jokes.

**Presentation of main material of the research.**

Very often talk about the inequality of men and women. Even in the most democratic society, women often face non-recognition of the equality of their rights and opportunities. Most often, the solution to this problem begins with the fact that they show the status of a woman to society, all the time proving that a woman is no worse than a man. Today, due to the huge social concern about the low status of women in society, the study of female gender roles is given great attention (Martyniuk A., 2004). In addition, this problem is stimulated by the women's social movement (Shestakov V., 1982).

Historically, men have power over women. And in order to change this situation, it is necessary to focus on changing and rethinking both female and male roles (Lytvynova T., 2000:84-87).

For many centuries, women were perceived by society as a weaker sex, incapable of work, requiring physical and intellectual efforts. Motherhood, the natural biological role of women, has traditionally been considered the most important and responsible occupation for them (Guk L., 2000:90-95).

That's why since ancient times a woman was perceived only as a source of life. As a result, the stereotypical view: the place of a woman – at home (in the kitchen, near children, etc.) determined all the possibilities of female expression.

It was also believed that girls should learn, and women should not work outside the home. Until the XX century. the problem of the need for female education was considered by society only as secondary in importance, and opportunities to find work were very rare. Business, politics, prestigious professions – everywhere dominated by men.

The myth of female inferiority has greatly influenced the status of women in modern society and women continue to face social prejudice and sexual discrimination in all spheres of life – at home, on the street, at work and even in law. Social welfare laws and anti-crime, anti-prostitution, and anti-abortion laws often show bias against women (Guk L., 2000:90-95).

Using a gender approach to analyze the socio-cultural life of our society allows us to identify all its gender asymmetry (Annen D., 1994). In modern culture, value attitudes are quite clearly expressed, according to which everything that is defined as «male» is in the center of attention and is considered dominant, and what is defined as «female» is perceived as secondary and less worthwhile. Thus, gender stereotypes underlie the formation of certain social expectations in relation to gender, to elevate some and negatively evaluate other traits and

qualities of people depending on their biological sex (Pylypenko I., 2021:69-72).

The basis of female discrimination is the existing system of dividing gender roles due to the expectation of behavior and actions that correspond to the position of men and women in society (Guk L., 2000:90-95).

The mechanism that ensures the consolidation and transmission from generation to generation of gender roles is gender stereotypes.

In the field of interpersonal communication, there are simultaneously two ways of perceiving events, assessing the actions of both one's own and other people, reactions to what is happening – the first of them is based on the principle of automatism and, as a rule, is needed in ordinary, typical situations, the second – manifests itself in unfamiliar, unusual situations that require analysis and careful consideration (Ageeva V., Oksamytna S., 2021).

One of the tools that help a person navigate everyday events are stereotypes. Stereotypes are an opinion about the personal qualities of a group of people, they can be too generalized and biased towards innovations (Magradze G., 2000:23-26).

Stereotypes can be positive and negative, accurate and inaccurate. Their role in communication processes in general is very large: they allow the individual to assimilate and actively reproduce social experience; serve as an excuse for the actions of a particular person by referring to a stereotypical model of behavior.

The stereotype as an element involved in interpersonal communication contributes to the performance of several more tasks, namely: the creation and preservation of a positive «I-image», the protection of group values, cognitive and intergroup differentiation, the explanation and justification of social relations, the preservation and translation of cultural and historical experience (Shestakov V., 1982).

Gender stereotypes are intensively studied all over the world. Studies have shown that gender stereotypes were based mainly on gender characteristics and differences (Magradze G., 2000:23-26, Ageeva V., Oksamytna S., 2021). But the problem is not how different a man and a woman are, but how equal they are, it just depends on the characteristics of the culture.

In the public consciousness, gender stereotypes function in the form of standardized ideas about patterns of behavior and character traits. Male characteristic features include activity, thirst for adultery, power, success, ambition. A man is also characterized by such qualities as abstractness, independence, individuality, variability, infidelity, radicalism, instrumentality, etc.

Women are characterized by emotionality, tenderness, disinclination to sports, carefree appearance, attachment to the family, light-mindedness, alogicality, passivity, modesty, dependence and need for protection, loyalty, collectivity, unconsciousness, intuitiveness, concreteness, etc. If you turn to your own experience, it becomes obvious that not all women and men from tell these stereotypes.

But nevertheless, in each society there are different roles of a man and a woman in accordance with their gender «to be a man» implies to play a certain social role, «to be a woman» – to play another. These social roles, conditioned by the sign of sex, are the setting of expectations that determine how a man and a woman should act in accordance with the norms adopted in a given society.

Analyzing the work of «Gender and Discourse» (Annen D., 1994) we can say that the probably established facts were even less than previously thought. Only the following statements are considered firmly established: girls surpass boys in verbal abilities (conversational and linguistic abilities are better expressed); boys surpass girls in visual and spatial abilities, boys have better abilities for mathematics, men are more aggressive (both verbally and physically).

Conversely, the list of qualities that even psychological scientists considered predominantly female or male and which did not turn out to be so in fact, is very large. For example, the idea that: girls are more «social» and more exposed than boys to psychological influence and action; girls have lower self-esteem; girls have less pronounced motivation to achieve, the desire to thrive is considered unreasonable and can be classified as gender stereotypes (Vlasov P., Voynych G., 2000:66-69).

With all due respect to the scientific tradition, all this is more than conditional, because it is very difficult (if at all possible) to separate the abilities «given» by nature. The world meets the boy and the girl with different expectations, and from the very beginning, from the first lemony of the baby. And expectations are not just thoughts, they materialize in the very concrete actions of those people who form a small child around the clock. And these expectations, of course, are largely formed by the «myth of gender», which thereby turns into a real force directly involved in education and training.

Since the 80s, scientists who studied gender differences began to feel freer. Initially, those who were engaged in research in this area tried to «increase the idea of sexual equality», denying inflated stereotypes. And then, in 80–90 pp., as a result of many studies, gender differences were

found that are no less significant than «behavioral» ones studying other areas of psychology. The results of some scientific searches confirmed stereotypical ideas about the fact that women, in general, are less aggressive, more prone to guardianship and more responsive (Magradze G., 2000:23-26).

The current situation is interesting because now there is a change in many existing by this time moral gender stereotypes, which, due to the performance of many necessary functions, cannot completely disappear. But many existing such stereotypes no longer correspond to the socio-cultural conditions of the 20th century, primarily to the changed socio-legal status of women.

So, stereotypes are an opinion about the personal qualities of a group of people, they can be too generalized and biased regarding innovations. Stereotypes can be positive and negative, accurate and inaccurate. Gender stereotypes are socially and culturally conditioned thoughts about the attributes, qualities and norms of behavior of representatives of both sexes and their reflection in language.

Speaking about gender stereotypes, it is necessary to mention such an important phenomenon as sexism. Sexism (or discrimination against women) is the distinction or exclusion of restrictions on the basis of sex, aimed at weakening or nullifying the recognition, use or exercise by women of human rights and fundamental freedoms in social, cultural, political, economic, civil or any other field.

Considering gender social stereotypes in English-language jokes, it should be noted that in the vast majority of anecdotes relating to social stereotypes are sexist, that is, openly or veiled discriminate against women or men on the basis of their sex, ridiculing inconsistency in the assigned duties, rules and methods of obligatory behavior, such as:

1) Fred: Have you ever seen one of those machines that can tell when someone is telling a lie?

Joe: Seen one? I married one! (Meiers M., 1980).

As for the joke about family life – this phenomenon is so familiar in everyday life that few people think about its importance in modern culture and even more so about why from century to century this topic not only does not cease to be interesting, but, it seems, on the contrary, attracts more and more attention, such as:

2) A smart wife will always ask her husband's opinion – after she has made up her mind (Meiers M., 1980).

It is interesting to think about why men are so fond of joking on the topic of female logic, or rather, its full of essence or to remember with a «kind word» always something dissatisfied with his wife, an

extremely malicious mother-in-law and mother-in-law, frightening with one of her appearance:

3) My wife has a terrible memory – she never forgets anything (Johnson L., 2000).

Jokes that demonstrate a man-careless, who sees nothing around him and jokes about men who love to drink and who fall into rather ridiculous situations appeared because almost from birth the experience of a man and a woman is so different that if representatives of different sexes observe the same event, they will surely come to opposite conclusions and get completely different impressions. This dissimilarity is largely a source of misunderstanding between a man and a woman, conflicts and curious situations:

4) Husband: Let's go out on the town tonight and have some fun.

Wife: Yeah, but if you get home before me, remember to leave the front door open (Meiers M., 1980).

The irony of family life and sexual relations exists not only now, but was in the Middle Ages. Very often, women, especially those belonging to the lower and middle class in Europe, became objects of evil humor. Numerous jokes were often devoted to women's interest in the affairs of city government and their activity in solving issues of city life, the stupidity of women was ridiculed when they tried to influence the decisions made by city councils, it was believed that all these issues relate only to men and only they can decide something, the woman's opinion did not interest anyone:

5) I don't need to buy an encyclopedia – my wife knows everything (Meiers M., 1980).

Sex discrimination in Europe appears quite clearly in most literary works. In numerous farces, it is customary to portray a woman as a stupid, quarrelsome, greedy, cruel and depraved wife (Annen D., 1994, Shestakov V., 1982). A man in

some anecdotes looks weak and unsuitable for life, and a woman boldly and confidently takes on many purely male functions.

Probably, it would be too bold and even wrong to say that a modern joke on the relationship between a man and a woman draws its plots from literary works of the Middle Ages, but at the same time the similarity of plots and images is meaningless to deny. One has only to be surprised at the fact that modern man, just like a medieval man, referring to the topic of relations between the sexes and the role of women in the life of the family, tries to ironic over the same qualities, accents in similar situations, highlights the same characters.

Men are sure that they at all costs should dominate women in everything. Women no longer believe that the situation can change for the better. They are used to looking at each other either from top to bottom or from bottom to top.

**Conclusions and suggestions.** It must be noted that social stereotypes affect not only the personal life of a person, but also the life of society as a whole. Regardless of age, social status, each person is somehow included in the relationship with his and the opposite sex, respectively, jokes about various aspects of the life of men and women will be relevant to him. The joke causes a pleasant emotional reaction – laughter, which also explains its long existence and sufficient popularity. Thanks to the joke, the object being ridiculed is simplified, it becomes more accessible, which, on the one hand, relieves tension in relation to the object, and on the other, certainly fixes the existing stereotype. So, despite the fact that the development of mankind is very fast, social stereotypes are very tenacious, and even now they significantly affect the social environment as a whole and its individual spheres. Prospects for further research are seen in the studied phraseological units of the English language, containing the vocabulary of gender relations.

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