

**DESCRIPTION OF THE CONCEPT “OLDNESS” FROM THE CULTURAL LINGUISTICS’ POINT OF VIEW IN SPANISH AND RUSSIAN (BASED ON LEXICOGRAPHICAL SOURCES)**Alesya S. Pashonina<sup>1</sup>Fatima M. Dadberova<sup>2</sup>

**Abstract:** Due to the increased attention of modern science to a man as a representative of culture, conceptual linguistics turned out to be one of the most promising directions in linguistics. The concept is a kind of semantic nest that covers a significant part of the language vocabulary. In this paper, the concept of old age in Spanish and Russian languages was studied on the basis of lexicographic sources. However, lexicographic sources are only an attempt to order a language integrated into the syncretic consciousness of a person for research purposes. The concepts are implemented in a language using semantic fields. The field theory is based on the idea of regularities and semantic links existence between linguistic units. The linguistic-cultural concept as a conventional unit can only

be considered in cooperation with other concepts. The concept of old age was described in connection with the concepts of wisdom, stupidity, respect, neglect, death, life, fear, poverty and wealth. In both languages old age is understood as the phenomenon of predominantly negative nature, but with a higher percentage of units with improvement evaluation in Spanish. The obtained data will be tested in speech by the means of a free associative experiment. The research has an applied value in such related sciences as pedagogy, gerontology and sociology.

**Keywords:** old age, concept, cognitivism, semantic field, linguistic culturology, Spanish, Russian.

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## Introduction

Linguistic-cultural concepts are "the main cell of culture in the mental world of a man" [1], "the result of the collision between the vocabulary of a word and the personal and people's experience of a man" [2]. Concepts reflect and form the way of native speaker thinking [3], combine in themselves both the values of an individual and the values of the whole linguistic-cultural community [4].

The choice of the concept "old age" as a subject of research is relevant in the context of population global aging. In this study, his phraseological and paremiological composition was selected and described; the conclusions were drawn about the similarities and the differences in the linguistic picture of the world among native speakers.

## Materials and methods

In order to study the concept of "old age", inscribed in the syncretic consciousness of people [5], comparative, component and descriptive methods were applied. The starting point for the analysis was the idea of a three-layer (nuclear-peripheral) structure of the concept [2], which has no clear

boundaries [6]. The concept of old age was subject to three-dimensional analysis: from the point of view of the internal form, a passive layer and an active layer, grouped around the name of the concept [7]. LU "vejez" is the name of old age concept in Spanish, and LU "old age" - in Russian.

The material of the study was 62 phraseological and 63 paremiological units in Russian language and 53 phraseological units and 39 paremiological units in Spanish language, selected by the method of continuous sampling from the dictionaries.

PU is a combination of words, characterized by six types of stability: the stability of use, structural-semantic, lexical, syntactic, and also evaluative stability [14]. Since evaluation is usually systematic, one can speak of a developed cultural stereotype expressed in PU, which implies that the PUs are directly correlated with cultural concepts, and the concept as a mental entity receives a material expression in the form of PU.

Paroemia includes proverbs, sayings, fables and riddles. The sign of grammatical completeness and the ability to express a completed thought

serves as a factor that allows one to separate proverbs from sayings [8]. Sayings have only a nominative function, and the proverbs express a complete judgment, and these judgments are of a special kind, since they represent the generalization of human experience [9]. For this reason, a particular interest for this study is the proverbs as the most reliable guides to discover the linguistic

and cultural specifics of the Spanish and Russian language picture of the world. Paremiyas demonstrate the most stereotyped perception of old age, since paremiyas are the units which exist in the language for a long time.

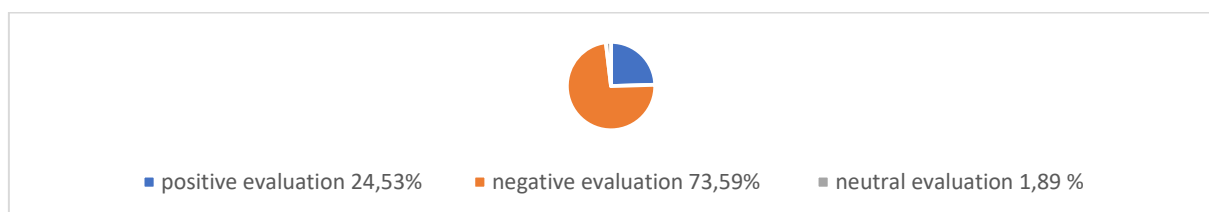
**Results**

Studied PU were divided into 4 semantic groups.

*Tab. 3 Distribution of Russian and Spanish phraseological units according to the semantic groups*

Semantic group name	Number (Russian)	Number (Spanish)
Old age: appearance	7	8
Old age: experience / wisdom - stupidity	6/5	7/4
Old age: veneration / disregard	6/16	7/1
Old age: death / life	22/2	26/2

PU were also classified according to evaluation component:



*Fig. 1. Evaluation of the phraseological units with semantics of oldness in Spanish*

Semantic group name	Number (Russian)	Number (Spanish)
Old age: experience / wisdom - stupidity	11/6	10/0
Old age: veneration / disregard	13/2	11/0
Old age: death	4	4
Old age: indisposition	10	8
Old age: welfare	8	2
Old age: cyclicity of life	1	1

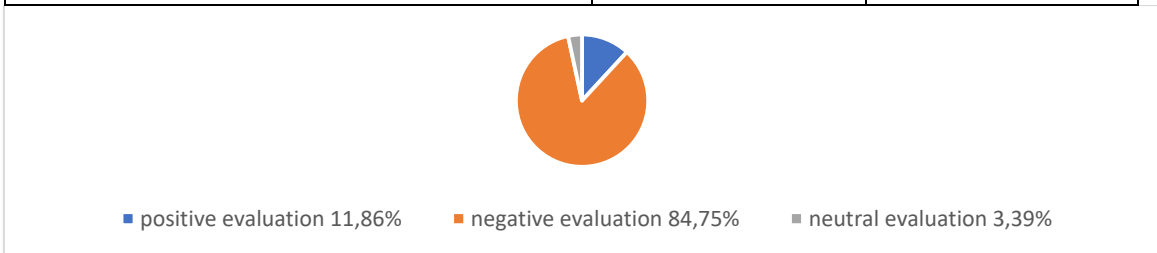


Fig. 2. Evaluation of the phraseological units with semantics of oldness in Russian.

At the second stage of the study material of PU, which were also the concept of old age was studied on the classified according to semantic groups:

Tab. 3 Distribution of paramiological Russian and Spanish units according to the semantic

Also, the studied PU were classified in terms of connotation.

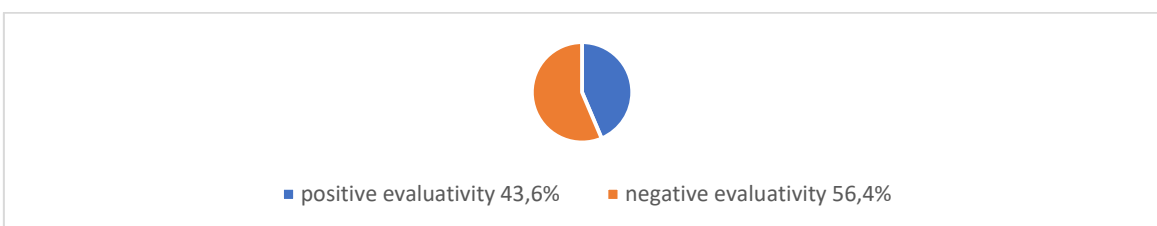
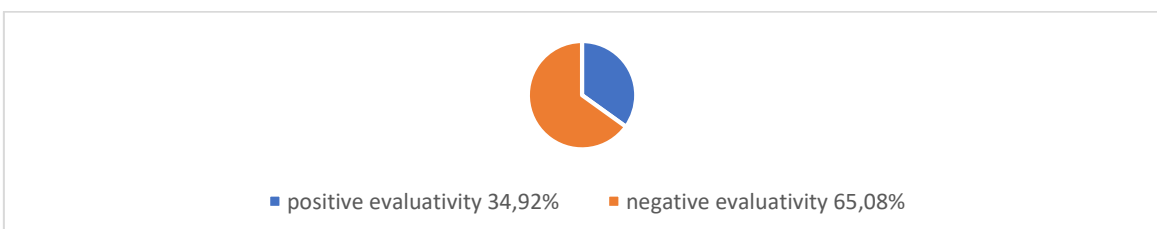


Fig. 3. Evaluation of the phraseological units with semantics of oldness in Spanish.



*Fig. 4. Evaluation of the phraseological units with semantics of oldness in Russian.*

## Discussion

The PU of the group "old age: appearance" of both languages is characterized by the presence of an animalistic component (for example, patas de gallo and crow's feet, gray as a harrier) and attributive component (for example, canas - gray and barba - beard) as the symbols of old age in both linguistic cultures. We would like to note especially such phrase as "the old mushroom". The word mushroom comes from Irish gerbach (wrinkle, crease) [10]. This can explain the fact that this PU refers to an old wrinkled person today.

The semantic group "old age: experience / wisdom-stupidity" is prevailed with the animalistic component, and in both languages it is an attribute of wisdom and experience of mostly elderly men (gato, lobo, perro, sparrow, wolf), which leads to the conclusion about the patriarchy of the Spanish and Russian culture. With regard to the perception of old age in connection with stupidity, judging by the studied material, the stupidity of older people is treated not so much as the lack

of mental abilities, but rather as the making fun of their inappropriate behavior of this age (fall into childhood, to have an old head on young shoulders, viejo verde, teñir las canas).

Speaking about the semantic group "old age: veneration / neglect", it is worth noting that if the veneration of old people in Russian and Spanish is transmitted approximately by the same number of PU (7 in Spanish and 6 in Russian), then the concept of neglect is not mentioned in this way (1 in Spanish and 16 in Russian), and these PU emphasize a disdainful attitude towards an old woman (grymza, karga, korzovka, korzukha, an old purse, hrychovka).

The analysis of the PU group "old age: death/life" allowed to make the following conclusions. First, in both languages, at a figurative level, the parallel is drawn between the aging process and certain natural phenomena (sunset of life, at the sunset of days, en el ocaso de la vida, el invierno de la vida). Also, old age is perceived by the native speakers as the stage closest to death (más muerto que mi abuelo, último viaje, irse a para para el cementerio, one foot in

the next world, to kiss the dust, the last hour, to pass away). Secondly, the PU of this group has the attributes of death (sepultura, tumba, sepulcro, cementerio, grave board, grave, white slippers). The PU containing the death attribute component have a metonymic character for the most part, that is, both the Spaniard and the Russian lexeme morir or to die will be preferred by bajar al sepulcro, encontrar su tumba, go to the grave, find a grave. You can conclude about the euphemistic function of death attributes in relation to the words-taboo death and muerte. Thirdly, native speakers tend to associate the concept of old age and death with the concept of "God", "Lord" (God took, give the soul to God, God remembers) "Señor" "Dios" (descansar (dormir) en la paz del Señor, llevarse Dios, acordarse Dios). Fourthly, both languages have the perception of old people as the barriers to the full life of young people (comer el pan de los niños, to spoil another's life). Fifthly, it is interesting that the conceptual sphere of the Spanish language, in contrast to the Russian one, the stereotype perception of old age as death to positive, which could be expressed by the formula "old age =

death, but old age = life" (tercera edad (third age) and cuarta edad (fourth age). If only 3 results are presented, while the corpus of Spanish will give us 730 references. There is a trend towards a positive perception of old age in Spanish, scheduled as the result of social and political actions.

Old age in PU appears, basically, as the phenomenon of a negative nature. In Russian language, the appraisal tends toward peyorativity by 11.16% more than in Spanish. There is a more pronounced tendency towards a positive perception of old age in Spanish: the number of PU with such an estimate in Spanish exceeds their number in Russian by 12, 67%.

The semantic groups "old age: experience/wisdom-stupidity" and "old age: veneration-neglect" intersect. In proverbs, in which experience and wisdom are an indispensable component of old age, a high percentage of the animalistic component is noted. In PU they use different names of animals: a horse (the old horse does not spoil furrows), a sparrow (you can not fool an experienced sparrow on a chaff), a raven (an old raven does not croak in waste), a wolf (an old wolf won't be captured);

pájaro (pájaro viejo no entra en la jaula), pez (el pez viejo no muerde el anzuelo), perro (el perro viejo si ladra da consejo), buey (buey viejo asienta bien el paso). The animalistic component is represented by masculine nouns, which was confirmed by the hypothesis about the patriarchy of Spanish and Russian culture put forward during the analysis of PU.

The proverbs with the semantics "old age: stupidity" and "old age: neglect" were found only on the paremiological tier of Russian language. For example, I have lived to a bald spot, but I have not gained the mind; an old one like a small one, but a small one is stupid; was born small, was growing up stupid and grew drunk; I do not know anything dying old; Fedora is big, but stupid). This was confirmed by the assumption put forward earlier as the result of PU analysis, that in general a more disdainful attitude towards the elderly was fixed in Russian culture.

It can not be said that the carriers of the Spanish language do not consider old age as stupidity mainly, since this phenomenon takes place at the phraseological level. The paremiological fund can be replenished, for example, by

the transition and the rethinking of units at lexical and phraseological levels [11].

The native speakers of Russian and Spanish are characterized by the perception of old age in relation to death (they do not die of old age, they do not live as young people, a la vejez y a la juventud espera el ataud).

In PU, in which old age is associated with ill health, an animalistic component is present usually (a gato viejo - ratón tierno; a galgo viejo echadle liebre no conejo, youth flies as a bird, and old age crawls like a turtle, eat bones if you are young, eat porridge if you are old) which is associated with the loss of quality over the years. Also this group is characterized by the names of illness symptoms (Qué es la vejez? Estornudar, toser y preguntar qué hora es; youth with hunting, old age with dandruff). It is also quite common to recognize the stamina of an elderly person (the broken dishes live for two centuries, the creaking tree lasts longer; no cae todo lo que bambolea).

After the analysis of the proverbs of the group "old age: welfare" [12] it was established that old age is associated with poverty (Grandmother is old and she has little money), in Spain, old age is

associated with wealth (a la vejez dinero y mujer). Moreover, Spanish language had not a single PU with the semantics of poverty.

The proverbs with the semantics "old age: the cyclicity of life" have a universal character and are inherent in both languages. For example, everything happened from the dust and everything will turn into dust and *todo es hecho de polvo y todo se tornará en el mismo polvo*. The generality of the concept about the cyclicity of life can be explained by the fact that the abovementioned paremias are the lines from the Book of Ecclesiastes and have a religious origin.

At the paremiological level of both languages a greater percentage of improvement evaluation is observed with the semantics of old age (Spanish - 43.6%, Russian - 34.92%) rather than in PU (Spanish - 24.53%, Russian - 11, 86%).

## Conclusions

Both in Spanish and in Russian, the concept of old age is correlated with the attributes of older people appearance.

In FU and PU, in which old age is associated with experience and

wisdom, the phrases with an animalistic component in the masculine gender predominate, which indicates the patriarchy of Spanish and Russian culture.

At the phraseological level of the Spanish and Russian languages, old age is associated not only with experience and wisdom, but also with stupidity. This ratio is also present at the paremiological level of Russian language. A more pronounced tendency is observed in Russian than in Spanish concerning the perception of old age in connection with stupidity.

Experience and wisdom in both languages are thought of as the reason for old age honoring. Both languages have the units that testify both to the deep respect for the elderly and to disrespect for them. The latter are more characteristic of the Russian language, and this neglect is mainly directed at a woman.

In Spanish and Russian, old age is associated with diseases, and in some proverbs it is emphasized that poor health does not interfere with the stamina and endurance of older people.

In both languages, old age is perceived as the last stage of human life.



In PU the figurative re-thinking with such semantics is developed by the means of a parallel between human life and the life of nature.

In the conceptual sphere of Spanish and Russian, the concept of old age is associated with the concept of death. The carriers of Spanish and Russian language because of the possible fear of the phenomenon of death replace the word-taboo with phraseological units containing the attributes of death.

Russian and Spanish language perceive old age as the barrier to the full life of young people. The language fixed the historical notion that a person has been given a certain period on the earth, and it is unfair to live longer.

The perception of old age not only as a stage close to death, but also as the continuation of life has arisen and exists today in contrast to this stereotypical representation in the phraseological fund of the studied languages. This feature is most typical for the Spanish language, than for the Russian one. The emergence of this PU contributed to a number of social transformations in Spain.

This non-standard perception of old age is reflected only in phraseology.

Paremia are the units that have long been in use, and the semantics of old age = life has arisen recently. It is logical that in proverbs old age is not conceived as the continuation of life.

### **Summary**

The hypotheses put forward should be checked in speech, because "there are not any languages that are floating in the air, but only people who are gifted with linguistic thinking" [13]. An associative experiment is the method that allows to reconstruct the fragments of the linguistic consciousness of an individual or a linguistic cultural community as a whole, and it was he who was chosen for the subsequent verification of the conclusions described in this article. The final results of the study can be taken into account during the teaching of Spanish as a foreign language to Russian-speaking students and vice versa in order to form an adequate perception of culture and thinking [15], [16] of the native speakers.

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