

**Russian Dictionary as Institution of Sexism:
Changes in the Constructed Meanings of Gender
in the Dictionary Entries from 1992 to 2007**

**By
Galyna Iarmanova**

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Department of Gender Studies

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Supervisor: Professor Erzsébet Barát

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ABSTRACT

This thesis focuses on the study of sexism institutionalized in the Russian explanatory dictionary. I analyze how the meanings of gender are constructed in the dictionary entries and how they have been changed under the influence of conservative discourse in the debate on language.

I use critical discourse analysis of the texts related to recent debate on the Russian language to examine the underpinning assumptions about nature of language and linguistic change. Further I compare the changes in the constructed meanings of gender from 1992 to 2007 edition of *Ozhegov Russian Language Dictionary*.

I find that there has been a methodical change of the constructed meanings toward more patriarchal representation of women and men.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

"[P]olitical struggle invariably takes place on many fronts at once. No feminist fairy with a magic wand ever comes up and says: 'OK, you can have non-sexist language or equal pay; now which is it to be?'"

Deborah Cameron¹, 1995

Feminist enduring concern with sexism in language has been often criticized by anti-feminists as 'trivial' and not worth bothering as there are so many other 'real' injustices. However, it is not 'only words' we are dealing with: language reflects the existing power dynamics in gender relations. It does not only reinforce the stereotypes about women consolidating their subordinate position in society, but also makes a certain way of perceiving reality appear as natural and inevitable. As Cameron (2006: 4) pointed out, feminist engagement in sexual politics has been aimed at contesting and changing this way of perception in order to change the existing arrangement between women and men.

The term 'sexism' refers to ideas and practices that downgrade women relative to men. Sexism in language is manifested through both 'everyday' interaction, such as using endearment terms for addressing women or making 'street comments' to insult them, and institutionalized conventional usages, which trivialize, derogate and make women invisible, such as generic pronoun *he*. (Cameron 1995: 105) As everyday sexism occurs in the 'unregulated' context, resistance to it is limited by informal, guerrilla-style. Institutionalized sexism, on the contrary, is more feasible for both research and systematic implementation of alternatives, inasmuch as sexist conventions of usage are codified in grammar manuals and dictionaries and

¹ From *Non-Sexist Language: Lost in Translation?* (2006, reprint from 1995), p. 20.

therefore are more liable to pointed criticism. Therefore, the concern with the sexual politics of ‘the’ language (Russian, English, etc.) has become an organized political activity for feminists. (Cameron 2006: 4)

The debate on sexist language was initiated by feminists in the early 1970s, and as Cameron (2006: 20) put it, non-sexist guidelines had “managed to achieve the status of orthodoxy” not just among feminists but among general public as well. Moreover, feminists have been reforming dictionaries as traditional guardians of conventional usage, questioning their authority and creating new different types of lexicography. Despite different opinions on the nature of the non-sexist language among feminists themselves and a recent backlash to non-sexist guidelines among anti-feminists, feminist concern with sexism in language has brought significant changes in language use over the last three decades.

Situation in Russia is significantly different. Sexism is not recognized as a problem in the public discourse; it is seen as something trivial and unimportant, if considered at all. One of the notorious examples that illustrate this prevalent attitude toward sexism is an incident with the talk show *Only a Man Can Create a Masterpiece*² aired on a national TV channel *Kultura [Culture]* in 2002. Not only its title, but also sexist cutting remarks of the participants supported by the show host have outraged feminist journalists. Association of Women Journalists initiated an inquiry to the Grand Jury of the Russian Journalists Union with request to recognize the talk show content as sexist, publicly denounce it and impose restrictions on its broadcast. However, “taking into account the need to increase talk show’s popularity

² “Shedevr mozhet sozdat tolko muzhchina”. Hereafter translation from Russian to English is mine, unless specified differently.

through some elements of provocation, playfulness and exaggeration”³, the Grand Jury delivered judgment that “neither the title nor the content of the show were a manifestation of gender discrimination or sexism”.⁴ Similarly, many other instances of sexism are often considered as ‘provocation’, ‘playfulness’ or ‘exaggeration’ and as such are not to be taken seriously.

Likewise, research on sexism in language is very scattered. Russian gender linguistics has received major criticisms for not taking into account the problem of sexism in language. There have been no attempts to issue and promote non-sexist guidelines; dictionaries as an institution prescribing certain (possibly sexist) meanings have not been examined either.

On the other hand, there have been excessive debates in the public discourse on the nature of language and the ways it ought to be used. There has been a conservative shift toward imposing censorship in the media/ literature and launching a nationwide campaign for ‘language purity’. Following the rhetoric of the debates, new versions of grammar books and dictionaries have been recently published.

As a step toward creating feminist sexual politics of the Russian language, I want to research sexism institutionalized in the explanatory dictionaries. My research questions are: How are the meanings of ‘femininity’ and ‘masculinity’ constructed in the entries of the contemporary dictionaries? What are the underpinning assumptions about the nature of gender differences? Have these constructed meanings changed (or remained the same) under the influence of the recent debates on language?

³ “za schet elementov nekotoryy provokativnosti, igrivosti, giperbolizatsii”.

⁴ Irina Rylnikova, *Public Discussion: Sexism in the Media* - http://www.owl.ru/win/womplus/2003/01_02.htm - accessed June 1, 2008.

In order to answer these questions, I choose the most recent edition of the Russian language explanatory dictionary and compare it with its preceding edition. I analyze assumptions regarding gender and ‘femininity’/ ‘masculinity’ of the dictionary entries. I situate my analysis in the context of the debates on language and examine the influence of the debates’ dominant discourse on the nature of changes in the dictionary entries if any such changes have been made.

My thesis is structured as following:

Chapter 2 covers a literature review of feminist scholarship on sexism in language. I examine how the focus of research has changed over time and how the study of sexism in language is approached according to the latest developments in the field. I mostly refer to Deborah Cameron’s books in this part of my research. Being a professional linguist, Cameron is able to conduct analysis on a much deeper level than most researchers in this field. Another reason, why I find her writings so suitable for my project is her strong feminist position, which in my opinion is crucial for a successful reform of sexist language. Main source for this chapter is Cameron’s *Feminism and Linguistic Theory* (1992). Moreover, I refer to her recent book *Verbal Hygiene* (1995) and collection of articles *On Language and Sexual Politics* (2006). I also review existing research on sexism in the Russian language and identify areas that have not been explored.

Chapter 3 contains a critical discourse analysis of the texts related to recent debates on the Russian language. I analyze the underpinning assumptions about nature of language and linguistic change. I also consider the main participants and their intentions for engaging in the debate.

In Chapter 4 I carry out an analysis of the dictionary entries. I compare the changes in meaning construction of gender from 1992 to 2007 edition of *Ozhegov Russian Language Dictionary*. For this, I choose parallel pairs of words denoting 'woman' and 'man' and analyze the underpinning assumptions in their definitions regarding the nature of gender differences. I am guided by Cameron's methodology of analyzing the dictionary entry for 'sex' from her book *Language and Sexuality* (2003). I analyze each pair of words separately whereupon I draw a conclusion about the change of the integrated meaning of gender. I pay closer attention to the meaning construction of 'femininity' as it is women who are a marked category in the sexist discourse, and their representation as 'the Other' is more salient than that of men.

In Chapter 6 I summarize my findings and make suggestions for further research.

CHAPTER 2: FEMINIST SCHOLARSHIP ON SEXISM IN LANGUAGE

2.1. *Embodied sexism vs. institutionalized sexism*

Sexism has been considered as both a cause and a symptom of women's oppression. As Cameron (1992: 104) points out, this distinction could be said to 'separate' feminists into two 'camps' insomuch as their possible solutions to the problem of sexism are utterly different in nature.

One of the most well-known representatives of radical feminists, who believe sexism of language to be a *cause* of women's oppression, is Dale Spender. In her book *Man Made Language* (1980), she grounds the notion of language being made by men from anti-feminist perspective; herewith, sexism is not only manifested in ambiguous or offensive expressions, but is embedded in the entire language system. As a result, women are alienated from language due to the lack of suitable linguistic resources for expression of their experience and feelings. Consequently, women's oppression through language cannot be fixed by minor changes in the linguistic practice. Only a complete abandonment of the existing 'man made language' and a quest for authentic women's language is considered to be able to liberate women.

However, these claims have received multiple criticisms from feminists. Cameron (1992: 156) regards the 'dream of common language' as both utopian and ahistorical. Besides, she argues, it essentializes women as a homogenous group on the base of their biology. Regarding presupposed male control over language, Cameron (p. 197) contests the possibility of men as well as any other dominant group, however powerful, to control the language on the ground that meanings are not fixed, but rather actively constructed in the context. According to her, it is only

reasonable to speak of men's 'control' over language in the terms of their domination of relevant linguistic institutions that control which definitions of the world are made look 'natural' and true, and which are excluded from the public discourse or made look ridiculous. Therefore, language is not sexist *per se*; rather it becomes sexist when organized into a certain discourse.

Researchers who view sexism as a *symptom* or a *sign* of women's oppression believe that changes of linguistic practices can mitigate the effects of sexism. They have initiated the debate on sexist language and searched for ways to contest the conventional sexist usages. Contesting and resisting sexism institutionalized in grammar books and dictionaries has been a large part of feminist sexual politics of the language aimed at the creating a better world without sexism.

2.2. Sexism in the domain of grammar

Starting from the late 1960s, sexism in the domain of grammar has been widely discussed by feminists. As Cameron (1995: 132) points out, guidelines for non-sexist language have been attracting more controversy and provoking more resistance than any other reference materials of such kind, due to their overt political agenda. But feminists continue their promotion, notwithstanding the difficulty of such linguistic reform.

2.2.1. Non-sexist language guidelines

Feminists have drawn attention to the fact that certain features of English language grammar downgrade women relative to men, for instance, androcentric

usages implying that the norm of humanity is male (as in ‘man in the street’, ‘mankind’, ‘forefathers’, ‘spacemen’, generic pronoun *he* and so on). This aspect of sexism was called by some feminists as ‘he/man’ language. Feminists have demanded concrete changes in speech and writing and suggested linguistic reforms to alter or eradicate offensive expressions. In 1973, a major publisher McGraw Hill endorsed ‘non-sexist language’, and gradually conventional use was indeed changed: *mankind* was replaced with *humanity*, generic *he* with generic *they*, *he/she*, *he or she*, *s/he*, *chairman* with *chairperson* and so on. (Cameron 1992: 117)

However, the reform has not always been effective. As Cameron (1992: 121) writes, “cosmetic changes like getting rid of *man* do not entirely work”, and do not necessarily bring desired linguistic ‘neutrality’. For example, ‘Ms’, especially in Britain and Australia, did not replace Miss and Mrs, but has been added to the system to create a whole new category, referring to “older unmarried women, divorcees and ‘strident feminists’ – in other words, to ‘abnormal’ and ‘unfeminine’ women who have not been able to get – or keep – a man”. Likewise, nouns with sex-neutral suffix ‘person’ intended for replacing generic ‘man’ are often used as an euphemism for ‘woman’ and are rarely used in relation to men. Cameron (1992: 122) employs these examples in order to show that changing the words is only one side of the problem, whereas their reception and transmission is another. This process cannot be controlled by feminists, who promote non-sexist terms. As a result many feminist alternatives with time regain the sexist meanings of their predecessors.

Another problem is that theoretical reformism assigns sexism to words rather than meanings, and the point of reform is therefore to make sure that words express their ‘true meaning’. In other words, as Cameron observes (2006: 17), the problem of

sexist expressions is made seen as their ‘outdatedness’ and ‘distorted reflection of reality’, which can be fixed with new ‘neutral’ and ‘more adequate’ words. However, as she goes on to argue, meaning cannot exist outside of its linguistic and extralinguistic context. She alludes to occurrences of neutral words with no overt gender marking being used as if intrinsically male in reference, such as *survivors* in “fourteen of survivors, three of them women” (2006: 18). This and similar examples show that language is not a purely representational medium whose purpose is an accurate reflection of reality; it can be used to create intentionally sexist meanings as well. In fact, she argues (2006: 25) language is ideological; reality can be represented in many ways, but conventional meanings make only a certain way of perceiving the world appear as natural.

2.2.2. ‘Inclusive language’

In the early 1990s guidelines for non-sexist language were revisited due to the new wave of opposition to them as allegedly a part the newly-discovered phenomenon of so called ‘political correctness’. As Cameron (2006: 19) points out, as a result, many feminists took a defensive position and consequently “[lost] sight of politics entirely”. In order to win mainstream acceptance, advocates of non-sexist language claimed that guidelines were not prescriptive, but only recommended. Their main concern seemed to be inclusiveness of the language and its civility/ sensitivity.

Cameron’s article *Non-Sexist Language: Lost in Translation?* first published in 1995 severely criticizes this notion of ‘civility’ or ‘sensitivity’ of language for being patronizing and incoherent (2006: 24). Language ‘civility’ conveys the idea that sexist/ racist/ ableist/ homophobic, etc. meaning should be avoided only in order to be civil and not give offence to the addressee, i.e. not hurt feelings of female/ Black/

disabled/ gay people who may be in the audience; therefore, she argues, if such people are absent, according to such logic, there is no reason to avoid those meanings.

The notion of 'inclusive language' used as interchangeable to 'non-sexist language' refers to the idea that sexism is merely a lack of inclusiveness. As an example, new revised guidelines recommend to replace the sexist expression 'maternal instinct' by 'inclusive' alternative 'paternal instinct'. However, as Cameron (2006: 25) notes, the concept of 'instinct' to nurture children is inherently sexist because it asserts that female biology is destiny, therefore, it loses its meaning outside of the patriarchal frame. It would seem more logical then to get rid of such expression altogether instead of making it 'inclusive'.

In general, Cameron clearly shows that without overt political argumentation of why sexist usages should be abandoned, revised guidelines for non-sexism language prove to be both inconsistent and ineffective. This is not to claim that feminist efforts to reform the language did not bring any results. On the contrary, the changes are quite noticeable. But as Cameron demonstrates, in order to be effective, non-sexist guidelines must be both prescriptive and persuasive to its readers overtly explaining the political motives of the feminist linguistic reform instead of merely suggesting 'civil' or 'inclusive' language.

2.2.3. 'Positive language'

In order to eliminate sexism in language, it is not sufficient to make language neutral as most non-sexist language guidelines suggest. According to Cameron (1992: 126), challenging sexist representations of reality and confronting people with

their often unconscious prejudice is much more important than creation of 'standard' non-sexist guidelines. For her, making women visible in the world is a crucial political task of non-sexist language, the one which non-sexist guidelines often fail to achieve.

Thereby, Cameron introduces the idea of 'positive language', or 'visibility strategy' as akin to positive discrimination. She argues (1992: 125) that feminist alternatives to sexist expressions should not be presented as better in terms of their alleged linguistic merits but rather "in terms of political utility for raising consciousness, denouncing sexism and empowering women". A concrete example of such 'positive language' is her choice to use feminine generic *she*, *her* in her writing and speech. Its effectiveness lies exactly in its shock value, which may irritate readers; however, as Cameron asserts it will not slip unnoticed. Such decision is not politically neutral, but as Cameron (1992: 127) argues, no linguistic choice whether conventional or feminist can be neutral any longer. Challenging of the purported neutrality of conventional use is in fact one of the main objectives of non-sexist language as Cameron sees it. As every act of speaking or writing signals either acceptance or rejection of the existing order, the task for feminists is to use language "in a way that constantly questions its meaning and status" (p. 227).

2.3. Sexism in the domain of lexicon

Word meanings are more frequently changed than grammatical rules, as new words are borrowed or created, and old words gradually change their meanings or go out of use. Dictionary, along with publishing, mass media and educational practices,

is one of the gatekeepers the new feminist words/ meanings have to pass in order to be acceptable in the public domain of language use. (Cameron 1992: 113)

Dictionaries as well as other codified linguistic norms are not only descriptive, but prescriptive. Their declared aim is to record people's use of words, but since it is impossible to document the usage of every speaker, dictionaries have to be selective. Thus, they impose their selective meanings as if those were universal and consensual. (Cameron 1992: 114)

As dictionaries remain authoritative for most speakers, feminists have been analyzing their definitions and examples and advocating for the change if definitions were sexist or contentious. Such analysis also makes possible the deconstruction of the meanings disseminated by dictionaries. Feminists have created their own non-sexist versions of standard dictionaries.

Moreover, some of them have endeavoured challenging the authority of dictionaries in general. *A Feminist Dictionary*, compiled by Cheris Kramarae and Paula Treichler uses a different notion of lexicography: words are not defined as how they should be used; rather each word presents a list of quotes from the writings of different women in order to demonstrate the word usage. This and similar attempts of feminist lexicography question the power of dictionary as an institution. Another alternative strategy to question conventional meanings is deliberate play with words such as *herstory* instead of *history* or *dick-tionary* instead of *dictionary* to emphasize the androcentrism of these phenomena. (Cameron 1992: 110-115)

2.4. Research on sexism in the Russian language

Most research on gender in the Russian language has been conducted in two linguistic schools: *Ivanovo State University* and *Moscow State Linguistic University*. According to Alla Kirilina (2004: 80-85), who is considered one of the most influential researchers in this field, the scope of inquiry of the contemporary gender linguistics in Russia includes “cultural phenomena of *masculinity* and *femininity* as a part of language picture”⁵, sex differences in speech styles, and gender as a “socially and culturally constructed phenomenon which defines one’s social, cultural and cognitive orientation in the world”⁶. Studying gender differences is narrowed down to the ‘cultural variable’ without analysis of *power relations* between women and men. Likewise, occurrences of ‘gender asymmetry’, i.e. sexism, such as male being a norm for human, are explained not as a product of the existing power between the sexes, but as “a consequence of the fact that for Russian language the extralinguistic category ‘gender’ is irrelevant for many communicative situations”⁷.

As Kirilina (2004: 91) notes, both these linguistics schools have been severely criticized by Western⁸ feminists for not paying attention to the problem of sexism in language. However, gender linguists intentionally reject feminist methodology as “ideological and therefore biased”⁹, as opposed to allegedly ‘impartial’ and ‘scientifically objective’ agenda of their own research. Apparently, postmodernist

⁵ “osobennosti otrazheniya russkim yazykom poniaty ‘zhenstvennost’ i ‘muzhestvennost’”, p. 80.

⁶ “socialno i kulturno konstruiemy fenomen, vo mnogom opredeliaushiy socialnuu, kulturnuu i kognitivnuu orientaciu lichnosti v mire”, p. 83.

⁷ “nechetkoe razgranichenie po polu, bolshaya variativnost sposobov vyrazhenia pola mogut oznachat ego nerelevantnost vo mnogih kommunikativnykh situatsiyah”, p. 92.

⁸ I realize the possible bias of such term; however it is convenient for the purpose of contrasting Russia with Europe (mostly Britain and Germany) and US, where most extensive research in feminist linguistics has developed.

⁹ “feminism rassmatrivaetsa kak ideologiya, kak priyatstvo dlia podlinno nauchnogo poiska”

notion of situatedness of any knowledge production¹⁰ is not very popular among gender linguists, either.

Alongside with institutionalized gender linguistics, the critical feminist linguistics is gradually developing. Kirilina (2004: 91) describes their research objectives as “analyzing androcentrism and sexism of Russian language and suggesting changes in the linguistic practices in order to eliminate it”¹¹. As expected, their approach does not find support among gender linguistics. These feminist researchers voice their demands to reconsider norms of Russian language in order to eliminate sexism, however without any practical guidelines/ suggestions for such changes. Most of their work is based on Western feminist linguistics methodology, and concentrates mainly on the analysis of women’s/ men’s representations in the media, textbooks, and women’s literature.¹² They are rather individual researchers concerned with sexism in Russian than an organized research group.

More productive study of sexism in Russian language has been conducted by Western researchers since the late 1980s. The nature of their research was broader in scope than that of developing Russian feminist linguistics. It was mostly concentrated on grammar structure of Russian language. Fundamental works in this area belong to D. Weiss, S. Schmid and U. Doleshal. They researched usage of

¹⁰ Widely recognized in the Western philosophical thought notion that impartiality and universality of knowledge production is illusory, as in fact any knowledge is local, partial and historical; therefore, knowledge production is considered not as a move towards ‘truth’ but first and foremost as a power move. Developed by Donna Haraway – see her *Situated Knowledges: the Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective* (1991), p. 189.

¹¹ “vyavlenie i preodolenie tak nazyvaemogo seksizma yazyka”

¹² See I. Sandomirskaya. *Around the B. Power and the magic of writing* (1992); T. Barchunova. *Sexism in ABC* (1995); S. Scheglova. *Gender modes of behaviour: analysis of textbooks for schools* (1998); N. Gabrielian. *Eve means “life”* (1996); Alla Denisova, *Hate Speech in Russian Media: Gender Aspect [Yazyk vrazhdy v rossiyskikh SMI: gendernyy aspekt]* (2002); Nadezhda Azhgikhina, *Gender Dimension of Russian Media [Gendernoe izmereniye rossiyskikh SMI]* (2003).

parallel female and male forms and correlation of linguistic category 'gender' with extralinguistic category 'sex'.

Weiss (1991) gives evidence of instances of the word *human being* [*chelovek*] referring to males only, as well as frequent instances of male nouns being used as an unmarked category for denoting both sexes. He emphasizes an overall tendency toward 'masculinization' of Russian grammar. The analysis of female and male nouns shows androcentrism of grammar structures; nouns with feminine endings are mostly derogative/ colloquial and therefore cannot be used in formal language. Based on his findings, Weiss makes a conclusion that feminist reforms of Russian grammar similar to those of English or German languages, cannot be applied not only due to the lack of 'political will', but mostly due to the range of other linguistic reasons (1995: 283). Other researchers make similar conclusions about difficulty/ impossibility of systematic reform of Russian grammar¹³. There have been no attempts to compile non-sexist language guidelines, either.

As to research on sexism in the domain of lexicon, there has not been much activity in this area. Up to date, a Russian equivalent of *A Feminist Dictionary* has not been produced yet. Similarly, no feminist attempts to examine and challenge definitions of standard dictionaries of Russian language have been made.

My analysis of the (constructed) meanings of contemporary Russian language dictionary can partially cover the research gap in this field. Contesting sexist definitions of an authoritative dictionary may well be the beginning of feminist sexual politics of the Russian language. Therefore, I will compare the meaning construction

¹³ See U. Doleshal. *Referring to women* (1995).

of gender in the most recent revised edition of dictionary and its previous version. I will place my analysis in the context of recent debates on the Russian language.

In the next chapter I will discuss the recent debate on language in more detail, taking into account participants, their reasons and analysing the underpinning assumptions of dominant discourse regarding the nature of language and its changes.

CHAPTER 3: RUSSIAN DEBATES ON LANGUAGE

3.1. *Creating moral panic in the language debates*

In the last decade Russia has witnessed an on-going debate on language. Besides specialized linguistic editions, the changes in language have been excessively discussed almost in every type of media: in the talk-shows, specialized TV programs dedicated to the questions of ‘speech culture’, and in the news reports. The problem of ‘language corruption’ was discussed within the education system, among linguists and even on the legislature level¹⁴. A great number of publications alerted that Russian language is under a threat because of recent tendencies in its use. There are two major discourses in this debate: (1) dominant conservative discourse supported by the Government, journalists and ‘conservative’ linguists; and (2) counter-discourse supported mostly by ‘liberal’ linguists. This section examines arguments of the dominant discourse on the nature of changes in the language use.

First, argue the participants, over the last few years, Russian has been ‘flooded’ with new words that have not been used before. These include: (1) prison slang that has appeared in the media after the disintegration of Soviet Union, and has been adopted by many politicians and other public figures and eventually received wide sanction in every day language use; (2) loan-translation of foreign, mostly English, words (such as *manager*, *sponsor*, *marketing*, *consortium*), which according to many media publications, sometimes make the text/ speech difficult to understand for the non-English-speaking audience and are annoying to the majority of language users

¹⁴ For example, the law *On the language purity* was passed in St. Petersburg in 2006. It prohibited using “unassimilated foreign borrowings, morphologically, grammatically or punctually incorrect usages of Russian language”, mostly concentrating on the advertisement and media. - <http://www.pravaya.ru/news/8102> - accessed June 5, 2008.

since most of these words have an exact Russian counter-part; and (3) internet or virtual slang composed mostly of erratives¹⁵ that originated in the internet community of blogs, livejournals and Fido-Net and has recently become popular among non-Internet users as well¹⁶. The first two types of innovation of words are regarded as alien to genuine proper Russian language and are seen to pose a threat of turning Russian into something that it is not and should not be. As a journalist Fedor Berezin noted: “Russian language is under a threat of destruction, or at least of a very poisonous corrosion, which is eroding linguistic fabric of Russian language”¹⁷. This idea of ‘destroying’ or ‘abusing’ the language, so frequently voiced in this discourse, however does not make any sense from the linguistics perspective. As Cameron (1995: 149) argues, this is rather a metaphor where language is understood not as cognition or perception, but as a cultural institution. Only as such it could be damaged. However, this is only implied and never stated clearly and overtly in this discourse.

The third type of innovation, namely virtual slang, also appears non-desirable to many in the debate, as it is argued to be connected to the other threatening tendency in language use, namely the overall decrease of ‘speech culture’/ ‘language competence’. Frequency of mistakes in published press, in the language of public figures such as actors, musicians, politicians and TV-hosts, and in the everyday speech of people, especially ‘younger generation’ are frequently cited instances of such tendency.

¹⁵ Erratives - words or expressions subjected to intentional corruption by the fluent in the literary norm language speaker.

¹⁶ This is a summary based on the articles from GRAMOTA.RU (www.gramota.ru – accessed June 5, 2008) – a governmental project for maintaining ‘purity’ of the Russian language, which includes free online dictionaries, grammar books and other reference materials. GRAMOTA.RU also includes a few columns on the changes of the language and recent linguistic trends, although I find their representation partial and biased.

¹⁷ “[rusский язык], nahodiaschiysia pod ugrozoy esli ne unichtozheniya, to vesma yadovitogo zasoreniya rzhavchnoy, rzyedauschey yazykovuu tkan russkogo yazyka” – Fedor Berezin (1997) *Mesto i rol russkogo yazyka v postsovetsoy Rossii*.

Proper use of the Russian language with appropriate grammar forms and pronunciation is argued to become increasingly rarer and in the jeopardy of total disappearance. In this debate the language of Pushkin, Tolstoy, Dostoyevsky and many other world-known classics is believed to represent the great cultural history of the Russian nation and as such it ought to be protected by any necessary means. Therefore, media indoctrinates intensively the need for the fight for 'language purity', which every conscious Russian citizen must get involved in as part of their duty. Moreover, since according to this logic not only is the language in danger, but through that the nation itself, the Russian State is also demanded to engage in this fight for 'linguistic purity' as well.

Such complaints are by no means new. As Cameron argues (1995: xi), "the alleged decline of language was a commonplace of educated discourse" centuries ago. However, now in the era of mass culture, the major field where this concern for language purity has been foregrounded in the Russian public discourse is the media. It has been discussed in an obsessive and moralizing manner, where participants keep making various references to some alleged cultural catastrophe. View that "[w]hen such iceberg language as Russian is not spoken properly and intelligibly any more, this is not the tragedy of the language (...). This is the tragedy of the nation"¹⁸, is typical for this discourse. Such hysteria over linguistic issues can be seen as something cultural historians have labelled as 'moral panic' (Cameron 1995: 82). As in any other moral panic, the scale of the concern for language is exaggerated, anxiety about it climbs to intolerable levels and the measures proposed to remedy are extreme and punitive. However, in most 'moral panics' such as 'white slavery',

¹⁸ "Kogda na takom yazyke-aysberge, kak russkiy, perestaut govorit' gramotno i vrazumitel'no, eto ne tragediya yazyka (...). Eto tragediya natsii." - Maya Cheremisina (2001) *About Russian Language [O sostoyanii russkogo yazyka]*, p. 18.

drugs, the 'Jewish problem' or overpopulation, the apparent problem is not always the real one. As Cameron (1995: 84) argues, "Behind the facade of legitimate concern, there are usually deeper and less socially acceptable anxieties being expressed in coded terms".

I think there are two kinds of anxieties that underpin the recent vocal concern for language in Russia and enable this debate become a form of moral panic. First, there is a fear of being 'defeated' by the West, more specifically by the United States, which will lead to economic crisis, political instability and loss of culture. Most Russian media represent the USA as an external enemy of Russia thereby maintaining and rearticulating the old cold war type of anxiety in the new social formation. Invasion of the language by foreign, mostly English words is made to look as an alien attack on something genuinely Russian. Russian language comes to be represented as a living asset of its nation, and due to its association with the rich Russian literary tradition in the 19th century, it signifies the remaining cultural 'superiority' of Russians over Americans. Hence, the fight for language purity is argued to be also a fight against an alleged Western conspiracy aimed at destroying Russia as a nation through corrupting its language.

The second kind of anxiety in these media debates that nurtures the moral panic on language points at the 'enemy from within'. The increasing immigration of Black, Asian and Arab people who "constantly reproduce unlike emancipated Russian women"¹⁹ poses a threat for ethnic Russians that will soon be "displaced" by the new-comers. According to the recent research (Charny 2006) the level of racism and xenophobia in Russia has significantly increased over the last ten years and is

¹⁹ Aleksandr Arefyev. *Fewer Russians – Fewer Russian-speaking population* [*Menshe rossiyan – menshe russkogovoriashih*] - <http://www.demoscope.ru/weekly/2006/0251/tema04.php> - accessed June 3, 2008.

much higher than in other post-Soviet countries. The prevalent assumption that language is a pedigree of the nation creates the missing link. If pure language signifies pure nation, it is easier to see why there is such a huge concern for protecting and supporting the Russian language under alleged threat both from outside and from within.

3.2. Counter-discourse of the debate: liberal linguists

Unlike other participants of current language debates, linguists not only recognize the language innovations but also study the nature of such changes and the reasons for their emergence as well as explore other kinds of innovations not discussed in the dominant discourse. However, linguists are not homogeneous in their views on language: there are also those who support dominant discourse assumptions on language.

The voice of linguistic experts in this debate is significantly less influential. Their works mostly are published in highly specialized editions such as *Linguistic Questions*, *National Notes*, *Russian Speech*, *Culture of Speech*²⁰; whereas linguistic conferences and panel discussions do not receive much publicity or media coverage.

Within this counter-discourse, the so much discussed linguistic innovations are considered an inevitable part of language dynamics. With internet gaining more importance over the years, it is not surprising that it has become one of the major factors influencing language development. Trofimova (2004: 28) demonstrates that internet slang functions as unifying knowledge, which separates its users from non-

²⁰ *Voprosy Yazykoznaniiya, Otechestvennye zapiski, Russkaya rech, Kultura rechi.*

members of the community. Such phenomenon of linguistic separation is peculiar to many professional groups, not just internet-users. Her analysis shows that internet slang involves creativity and in a sense reinforces rules of the Russian language. For example, in order to make it sound 'more Russian', users change stress in the adopted foreign terms or add Russian prefixes and suffixes and so on.

Another distinct feature of Russian internet community is writing with deliberate spelling errors. As Russian vowels are often pronounced differently from how they are written, internet users mostly ignore the rules and simply write as they speak. However, according to Skliarevskaya (2001: 179), these spelling errors, which in the dominant discourse are often cited as a worrisome tendency of language decline, rather signify a language game that demonstrates high level of users' language competency. In fact, in order to make as many mistakes as possible in a single word, which is frequently the case of internet slang, one has to know the correct spelling. Marina Bushueva further explains that this style of deliberately incorrect spelling emerged as grotesque reaction to numerous misspellings in online publications and livejournals.²¹

Liberal linguists believe that general trend toward simplification of the language expressed in spelling simplification of the internet slang and in the transition toward vernacular through jargon is not something radically new to the Russian language. Many colloquial words and utterances, alongside with numerous linguistic borrowings from French, German and English that seemed alien to Russian language of the 19th century, today appear as integral part of the language.²² Therefore, scholars view present drastic changes of the language not as an imminent

²¹ <http://www.sovetnik.ru/pressclip/more/?id=17248> - accessed May 30, 2008.

²² <http://www.philology.ru/linguistics2/plungyan-05.htm> - accessed June 2, 2008.

catastrophe, but as a new period of language development, which deserves special attention and research.

As Skliarevskaya (2001: 54-55) explains, it is appropriate to speak of 'language corruption' or 'intervention' only when language loses its functionality and linguistic processes are stopped or deformed. She believes this is clearly not the case of the Russian language: despite the decline in the culture of speech, language retains its functional activity and even reveals an increased intensity of the regular linguistic processes. Skliarevskaya emphasizes that in the time of social transformation, language innovations denote efficiency of adaptive mechanisms of linguistic system and its capacity for self-regulation, "just as external manifestations of the disease, which may be perceived as disease itself, are in fact organism's immunodefence in action"²³ (2001: 58). As a well-known linguist Maksim Krongauz noted (2005: 27), Russian language will "digest" all of these changes – preserving some of them and discarding others – and will finally produce new rules.

The alleged sharp decline of the language competency is regarded by many liberal linguists as exaggerated and unfounded. As Shmelev (2005) explains, the level of language competence has been rather stable in the past twenty years, which can be proved by steady amount of mistakes in spelling and punctuation at the entry exams to universities. The difference in perception is based mostly on the fact that in the times of the Soviet Union there has been censorship in published press, television and radio, and correctors ensured that the spoken and written word would remain within the officially accepted rules. With the dissolution of the Soviet Union,

²³ "... подобно тому как внешние проявления болезни, которые воспринимаются как сама болезнь, в действительности являются реализацией приспособительных, защитных сил организма".

such strict censorship has been abandoned, and 'language competence' stopped being a priority.

Drastic increase in errors on TV and radio is also connected with the appearance of new genres such as talk shows, where participants have to speak spontaneously and therefore do not have opportunity to check the 'correctness' of their language. Thus, Maksim Krongauz (2005) argues that politicians and other public figures did not lose their language competence over night; the actual level of their competence/ incompetence only became more visible.

In general, liberal linguists view language not as a set of codified norms, but rather as a live practice that is a subject to change. Users take an active part in these changes; yet, rather spontaneously and not as a planned action or reform. Within this liberal discourse, language politics are also regarded as a prerogative of the State; however, State's excessive interference into language is considered as something negative and worrisome. However, most liberal linguists do not question the authority of linguistic institutions to define what is 'correct' and 'proper' in the language use.

3.3. Dominant discourse in the debate: the hidden intentions

The government headed by the President, as the main adherents of the dominant discourse on language, in contrast, have a substantial financial and administrative resource, as well as control over the media, which is highly important because of their role as privileged sources of information and arbiters of opinion and their consequent agenda-setting power (Cameron 1995: 83). Many TV channels and printed media are controlled by the State. And those who are in open opposition to

the State policies encounter numerous problems from law enforcement bodies. For instance, one of the most outspoken Russian radio stations, “Echo Moskv” has been repeatedly asked to provide transcripts of their programs by the governmental officials, and some of their journalists were threatened by the state authorities. According to the reports of Amnesty International, a few recent laws restrict the freedom of expression, assembly and association in Russia as a part of strategy in order “to counter so-called Western influence”.²⁴ The murder of human rights activist Anna Politkovskaya who wrote a lot on state corruption, violence in the army and led a column on human rights in Chechen Republic in “Novaya Gazeta” since 1999, was most likely connected to the governmental disaffection with her investigative journalistic work. Amnesty International reports that many other journalists and activists are being threatened and harassed by governmental authorities²⁵.

Due to almost unlimited power over the media, Government is able to create and maintain moral panic in the debate on language. In my view, there are several reasons why creating moral panic regarding language purity and involving this particular dominant discourse on language is beneficial to the Government.

Firstly, a demand for language purity enables the Russian Government to take certain steps in order to promote Russian as a language of international communication in the CIS countries as well as in Russia itself within a few regions where Russians compose an ethnic minority and most population speaks a different language as their mother tongue. After the disintegration of Soviet Union, Russian is in danger of losing its status as dominant language, which weakens Russia’s political

²⁴ Amnesty International, *Russian Federation: Freedom of Expression is the Oxygen of Civil Society* - <http://www.amnesty.org> - accessed September 12, 2008.

²⁵ Amnesty International. *Russian Federation: Freedom limited - the right to freedom of expression in the Russian Federation*. - <http://www.amnesty.org/en> - accessed October 1, 2008.

influence over the post-Soviet republics. The campaign for purity of the Russian language may then justify the constant interference of the Russian Government into the politics of these regions. Thus, the Russian President Putin has declared 2007 “Russian Language Year” (official website of the program - www.russian2007.ru), which resulted in numerous linguistic conferences, competitions, exhibitions in Russia and abroad²⁶. One of the most important parts of the campaign was educational project for “united educational space”, which involved preparation of the Russian language manual, textbook on morphology and other educational materials for the students of the CIS countries; another was the production of television reels “The Main words” together with radio and TV program “Verba”, dedicated to the questions of ‘language purity’. The official slogan of the campaign was “Russian is the witness of change!”; however, most events were aimed at ‘language purity campaign’ which is conservative and in fact does is aimed at reversing changes in language.

The aim of “Russian Language Year Program” was to promote positive image of Russia within other countries and gain more political influence. The need to “protect the Russian language in Russia and abroad” justifies Russian political intervention via language policy in the internal policies of those countries.²⁷ For instance, following this rhetoric, Russian Ministry of External Affairs made a declaration to Ukrainian government that Constitutional Court’s decision to translate all films into Ukrainian (instead of Russian as before) “triggers concern”; therefore, Russian government is warning Ukraine that it will “take measures if necessary to protect

²⁶ Conference on the status of the Russian language abroad in May 2007; Exhibition ExpoLang – 2007 in Paris in January 2007; competitions for the best essay about the role of Russian language/culture among students in China, Germany, Canada - www.russian2007.ru - accessed October 10, 2008.

²⁷ All information about this project was taken from its official website, www.russian2007.ru – accessed June 5, 2008.

Russian language in Ukraine”²⁸. The Russian Government makes attempts to control other CIS countries through its political power (and potential threat), and “Russian Language Year Program” together with debates on language in general justifies such invasive measures.

Secondly, the emphasized necessity for a language purity campaign legitimizes punitive measures in Russia itself, such as intensification of censorship in the media and advertisements.

The campaign directed at increasing the level of language competence also supports the transition to General State Exam (GSE)²⁹ in 2008, which unifies academic programs of secondary schools across Russia and allows to control in fact what is “known, experienced and valued by everyone who passes through the [education] system” (Cameron 1995: 109). It is noteworthy that as a part of the new curriculum, Ministry of Education is planning to incorporate the ‘educational film’ about Russian flag, arms and national anthem created by the pro-governmental party “Edinaya Rossiya”, which very much reminds their political commercial for elections 2003³⁰. As to linguistic implications, the new curriculum adopts the prescriptive formal grammatical model based on a set of commandments instead of usages common for the region. As Cameron (1995: 95) suggests, “grammar is a ‘sacred’ subject, to be pursued for quasi-mystical reasons transcending mere utility”, as it seems to be the case for the present conservative discourse, which only makes sense if the ancient association between the grammar and discipline/ authority is taken into account. The conformity to the rules of grammar signifies the conformity to the laws of society. I

²⁸ “vyzyvat trevogy”, “vse neobhodimye mery dlia togo, chtoby zaschitit russkiy yazyk na Ukraine” – <http://www.lenta.ru/story/language/> - accessed October 10, 2008.

²⁹ Ediny Gosudarstvenny Examen (EGE).

³⁰ <http://www.lenta.ru/news/2008/06/11/edros/> – accessed September 19, 2008.

think it could be argued, then, that the Russian Government is interested in such panic around the language competence and consequent emphasis on grammar in the curriculum as a way of promoting conservative ideology in the sphere of politics as well. The majority of the codified materials (such as grammar books or dictionaries) are issued by the State; therefore, it enables the State impose certain discourse over the population as ‘natural’ and real.

The alleged positive impact of GSE reported by the media, which demonstrates successful adoption of ‘proper’ Russian by most students in the course of preparation to the GSE, as well as all multiple cultural events within “Russian Language Year” signify the Government’s ability to partially ‘fix’ the existing problem of language incompetence. Thus the maintenance of moral panic about the alleged corruption of the language both legitimizes measures for alleviation of the alleged ‘language problem’ and improves the Government’s image as an effective institution protecting the Russian culture in the eyes of the general public. Furthermore, it is shifting the public attention away from other problems such as poverty, trafficking in women and drugs, state level corruption and many others.

3.4. WCIOM³¹ surveys: analysis of assumptions regarding language

I will explore two recent surveys of the Russian Public Opinion Research Center (WCIOM) in more detail in order to analyze the assumptions about language of the dominant discourse present in the current debates. To better understand the role it

³¹ Wserossiyskiy Centr Obshestvennogo Mneniya – Russian Public Opinion Research Centre

plays in current debates on language, I will now turn to the background of this institution.

WCIOM was found in 1987 and over the years has become the leading center of public opinion research in Russia. It declared the commitment to the principles of scientific objectivity in accordance with the Code of Ethics ESOMAR and remained one of the least politically loaded sociological research and development centers in Russia. Because of this, it gained the reputation of highly reliable and unbiased institution not only in Academe but among general public as well.³²

However, in 2003 shortly before the presidential election of 2004, WCIOM was transformed into a joint stock company with 100% state capital. A young political analyst Valery Fedorov without any sociological background but close to the Presidential Administration was appointed as a new director, whereby the former team established under the leadership of prominent Russian sociologists such as Tatiana Zaslavskaya, Boris Grushin, Valeriy Rutgayzer and Yuri Levada left WCIOM in March 2004. The independent journalistic investigation on the WCIOM operations, carried out by the Internet publication “The New Times” in November 2007, revealed that each survey regarding social, economical and political issues is subject to approval by the Presidential Administration. In order to receive desirable results, the institution uses manipulative technologies far from sociological standards. However, this evidence is under discussion only in several Internet portals, hence for many Russians who do not have access to Internet WCIOM remains a trustworthy source of information on public opinion research. The results of their surveys are not only perceived by many as accurate and reliable, but can also influence opinion of those

³² www.korrespondent.net/119321/wciom/d/ – accessed May 23, 2008.

who do not have a clear stand on the issue under discussion. Findings of the two surveys which I will analyse below were presented at the press-conference within the “Year of Russian language” campaign³³ and later used by the Minister of Education Andrey Fursenko in his report on the GSE to the Parliament³⁴. Therefore, WCIOM may be considered as part of the State ideological machine that articulates and distributes prevailing assumptions of the state discourse regarding language in order to influence public opinion and promote governmental agenda.

First survey relevant to the present discussion was titled “*Russian Language: Should It Be Protected?*”³⁵ was conducted on May 13, 2008, and the other, “*Passing General State Exam (GSE) on Russian Language*”³⁶ was conducted a week later on May 20, 2008. Such regular mini-surveys with a sample representative of the adult population of Russian Federation were conducted by WCIOM weekly since 2000, with all archives available on their website. However, the methodology of the recent surveys differs drastically from that used by the old team in 2000-2003. Employment of openly manipulative techniques, examples of which I will describe in more detail below, enables researchers to influence the results of the survey.

The first survey on the ‘protection of the Russian language’ included two sets of questions. The first set explored usage and attitudes toward recent changes in language, i.e. new words described in the beginning of this chapter. The way questions on the frequency of new words’ usage were formulated represent these innovations as something negative and alien to Russian language. First, all

³³ Conference dedicated to the beginning of the competition “*Russian language in the Internet media*” [*Russkiy yazyk v elektronnyh SMI*] – <http://newsru.com> – accessed September 5, 2008.

³⁴ <http://vedomosti.ru/arkhiv/040908> - accessed September 10, 2008.

³⁵ “*Russkiy yazyk: Nuzhno li ego zaschiscat?*”- http://wciom.ru/arkhiv/tematicheskii-arkhiv/item/single/10144.html?no_cache=1&cHash=fd781860cc – accessed June 8, 2008.

³⁶ “*Sdaem ediny gosudarstvennyy ekzamen po russkomu yazyku*”- ibid.

innovations were denoted by the word “slang” which has negative connotations with rather unclear meaning of each category. These include: (1) professional slang (components of this category are rather unclear), (2) computer slang, (3) Internet slang, equated to the “scum” language³⁷ and “Olbanian”³⁸, and (4) ‘thieves cant’ (denoting prison slang). Accordingly, the majority of the respondents reported little to no use of those categories when answering the first question, *“Do you use any of these in your everyday life: professional slang; computer slang; internet slang (“scum” language, “Olbanian” and so on); elevated style; foreign words; thieves cant; dialect of Russian language widespread in your region; archaisms (obsolete words); quotes from literary works, films and song lyrics; proverbs, folk sayings and aphorisms?”*³⁹. Should the types of innovation have been formulated differently, many more respondents would have affirmed their usage. On the contrary, respondents reported much higher use of “quotes from literary works, films and song lyrics” and “proverbs, folk sayings and aphorisms”, which must have sounded more familiar to most of them. Thus, findings of the survey emphasize the seldom usage of new words, which makes such usage appear rather as a deviation, opposed to the frequent use of words that signify tradition.

The next question in the first set was concerned with the attitude of the speaker: *“How do you react when you detect (1) intentional corruption of words (which most*

³⁷ “yazyk padonkov”, which is one of the most cynic versions of internet slang rarely used in the internet communities.

³⁸ As defined in Wikipedia, “although the initial meaning is “Albanian”, this has come to mean Russian language in general and later the present slang (*oferratives*) in particular. The origin of this new meaning is the naive ignorance of an American livejournal user confronted with a script he could not read (Russian). Eventually he was told to “learn Albanian” and so this sentence “uchi albanskiy” is now used as a sneer at people making mistakes in Russian”. It is intentionally spelled with an error, *Olbanian*.

³⁹ “Ispolzuete li Vy v svoey povsednevnoy zhizni ...: professionalny sleng; kompyuterny sleng; internet-sleng (yazyk “padonkov”, “olbanskiy” i t.d.); nenormativnuyu leksiku (mat); vysokiy stil; inostrannyye slova; blatnoy sleng (feniu); dialekt russkogo yazyka, rasprostranenny v Vashem regione; arhaizmy (slova, vyshedshye iz upotrebleniya); tsitaty iz literaturnykh proizvedeniy, kino, slova iz pesen; poslovitsy, pogovorki, krylatye vyrazheniya?”, translation mine.

likely signifies the Internet slang, with negative connotations of the word “corruption”); (2) *excessive use of foreign language* (the Russian expression “extensive usage” here equals “abuse” in English); and (3) *jargon*, (most likely denoting prison slang and youth slang and also with negative connotations)?”⁴⁰ The word selection for denoting language innovations once again presupposes their negative nature, whereas using words *detect* and not *notice* or *observe*, and the word *react* imply that the language use must be guarded and reacted upon when used ‘improperly’. This is clearly a leading question, i.e. phrased in a manner that tends to suggest the desired answer, and as such is inadmissible in sociological research as it deliberately distorts results.

The proposed answers for this question varied from overt annoyance – through covert annoyance – unawareness of such usages – to taking it easy⁴¹. Apparently, there can be no approval of such language use with indifference being the maximum degree of tolerant reaction. Besides, such exact order of answers (from negative evaluation to neutral) together with prevalence of negative evaluation (two out of four) also urges a respondent to choose a negative answer. The brief outline of the findings in the report stated that society is supersensitive toward such ‘abuses’ implying non-acceptance and intolerance toward usage of new terms by the majority. Although the last option – taking it easy - received most percentage of answers (varying from 39% to 47% for each entry, opposed to 22-26% of those who “are bothered but do not show their annoyance” and 13-21% of those who “do not conceal their annoyance”), only frequency of negative evaluation/ reaction was mentioned in the report on TV and radio.

⁴⁰ “*Kak vy reagirujete, esli obnaruzhivaete: namerennye iskazheniya slov; ispolzovanie zhargonnykh slov i vyrazheniy; zloupotreblenie inostrannymi terminami; nenamerennye oshibki v pisme ili rechi*”.

⁴¹ “*Menia eto razdrazhaet i ya ne skryvayu etogo; menia eto razdrazhaet, no ya ne vyskazyvayu razdrazheniya; ya otnoshus k etomu spokojno; ya etogo ne zamechayu; no answer*”.

The second set of questions concerned the need for guarding the language. It was titled *"Purity of Russian Language Should Be Protected!"* which reads as an imperative⁴². It started with a question *"Do you think, it is necessary to put up a dedicated (deliberate) struggle for the purity of Russian language?"*⁴³. It is not clear what is in question here: the necessity of such struggle or its 'deliberate' nature; the positive value of 'language purity' is implied.

Second question was open-ended and formulated as *"Which measures do you think could ensure the most effective protection of the language purity?"*⁴⁴. This question is also leading as it already implies that 'language purity' must be protected. 55% of people gave no answer to this question. Such high non-response rate can signify either (a) a high sensitivity of the question (such as topics regarding sexuality or drug use), however, attitudes toward language use are not a sensitive topic, or (b) that respondents do not agree with/ understand the formulation. Usually such non-response rate compels researchers to reject findings or change the question. However, the received answers (45%) were broken down into the following categories: *"teaching Russian on a deeper level at schools, adopting new curricula"* (21%), *"imposing censorship in the media"*(9%), *"speaking properly in the family, watching the language"* (6%), *"prohibiting obscene language in public"* (5%), *"cultivating love for language in children"*(5%), *"reading and studying Russian literature more"* (4%), *"prohibiting the corruption of Russian words"*(3%), *"not using foreign words"*(2%) and *"other"*(1%)⁴⁵. It is remarkable that the first category is in fact

⁴² "За чистоту Русского языка нужно бороться!"

⁴³ "Как Вы считаете, следует ли вести целенаправленную борьбу за чистоту русского языка?"

⁴⁴ "Каким образом, на Ваш взгляд[sic] наиболее эффективную защиту чистоты русского языка?"

⁴⁵ "Более глубоко изучать русский язык в школе, внедрять новые программы", "вести цензуру в СМИ", "правильно говорить в семье, следить за речью", "вести запрет на использование ненормативной лексики в общественных местах", "прививать любовь к русскому языку детям", "больше читать, глубоко изучать русскую литературу", "запретить использование русских слов", "не использовать иностранные слова", "другое".

twofold: “teaching Russian better at schools and *adopting new curricula*” (emphasis mine), so that the second part of the formulation with higher figures could be later used in the governmental promotion of General State Exam. Those categories which have less than 5% (particularly, abolishing of foreign words and prohibition of ‘word corruption’) are not statistically significant in the sample of 1600 respondents, i.e. they could have been arbitrary and therefore cannot be considered representative.

The remaining three questions were structurally similar. Each question offered the pair of allegedly opposite statements, where the respondent had to choose which statement she agrees with most. One statement of each pair was formulated in such a way that most respondents would find a part of it unacceptable so that it could compel them to reject the whole statement and choose another one instead. Using this manipulative technique, WCIOM found that in general over 60% of respondents agreed with the following statements: *“Language must be guarded (protected); the purity of the language must be achieved by all possible means”* (opposed to *“The language always reflects the real situation in the society; it should develop independently without any intervention”*)⁴⁶, *“Adopting words from other languages and jargons/ slang harm Russian language”* (opposed to *“Adopting words from other languages and jargons/ slang enrich Russian language”*)⁴⁷, and *“The state must guard the purity of Russian language, take measures in the battle for language purity”* (opposed to *“Language should not be a subject to the state control; it is a concern of society, people themselves”*). The ‘countering’ statements were not included in the report; moreover, formulations were cited partially or paraphrased: “purity of the language should be achieved by all possible means” and “protecting

⁴⁶ “Yazyk neobhodimo oberegat, za chistotu yazyka neobhodimo borotsia” vs. “Yazyk vseгда otrazhaet realnuu situatsiu v obshestve, i on dolzhen razvivatsia samostoyatelno, bez vmeshatelstva s chyei-libo storony”.

⁴⁷ “Zaimstvovaniya iz drugih yazykov, jargonov nanosiat usherb russkomu yazyku” vs. “Zaimstvovaniya iz drugih yazykov, jargonov obogashaut russkiy yazyk”.

Russian language is a concern for the state and not society”⁴⁸. Altogether, majority of population is represented to support the campaign for ‘language purity’ with unlimited power of Government to intervene with the language in order to avoid the alleged cultural catastrophe.

The other survey, “*Passing the General State Examination*” offered respondents eight exercises taken from the Russian language examination tasks. The main message of the findings was that “only 4% of Russians were able to give the right answers to eight simple questions from school curriculum”⁴⁹. Such statement signifies that (1) language competence of most population is allegedly so low, that they are reported to be unable to cope with easiest tasks; and (2) that following the new curriculum of GSE can entirely fix this problem. The latter assumption was in fact used as an argument by the Minister of Education Fursenko during his speech in the Parliament, with reference to these findings⁵⁰. The given exercises inspected the knowledge of grammar rules, spelling, punctuation, word meanings morphological analysis (which was incorrectly called ‘phonetic’ analysis in the report) and were argued to measure “the knowledge of Russian language”⁵¹. Therefore, giving the ‘correct answers’ to these exercises, i.e. knowing the rules codified in the dictionaries and grammar books, was equated to “knowing/ speaking Russian language”. Consequently, it is these codified documents that were made to look as a repository of the ‘pure genuine Russian language’.

⁴⁸ “Ohrana russkogo yazyka – delo gosudarstva, a ne obshestva”

⁴⁹ “Tolko 4% rossiyan smogli dat pravilny otvet na vosem neslozhnyh voprosov po russkomu yazyku iz shkolnoy programy” - <http://www.regnum.ru/news/fd-central/ryazan/cultura/1002576.html> - accessed September 10, 2008.

⁵⁰ <http://vedomosti.ru/arhiv/040908> - accessed September 10, 2008.

⁵¹ “znanie russkogo yazyka”

As to compliance of the used methodology with the research objective, it is clear that asking eight questions cannot be sufficient for the measurement of language competence. Moreover, it is striking that summary of these findings presented at the conference “Russian language in the Internet media” contained numerous punctuation and grammar mistakes, together with confusing some linguistic terms (such as adverbs with conjunctions, or already mentioned phonetic and morphological analysis). I think such negligence of the document which main message is vindication of the ‘language purity’ campaign demonstrates that this battle for ‘language purity’ is only a means to pursuing some other hidden goals.

Altogether, the ironic underpinning assumption present in these surveys as well as other sources of the dominant discourse on language is that ‘correct’ language has a pure timeless form. The language of classic literature with rich lexicon and proper grammar is argued to be the ‘genuine Russian language’ which allegedly exists independently of language users, remaining unchanged over time, and as it becomes clear from the analysis of WCIOM surveys, this absolute perfect language is institutionalized in the reference materials. However, this ‘great and mighty’ Russian language is believed to be easily damaged by linguistic innovations. Thus, any change of this pure language is viewed as wrongful and as such it must be detected by language users. Improper language use caused either by unacceptable adoption of innovations or by low language competence calls for condemnation and correction. It is the pedigree of Russian nation and must be preserved in order for the nation to prosper.

In order to see whether these assumptions about language have affected the production of dictionaries, I will further analyze the changes of the Russian language explanatory dictionary in the course of the linguistic debate.

CHAPTER 4: DICTIONARY PROJECT: TRACING CHANGES IN THE CONSTRUCTION OF MEANINGS

4.1. *Ozhegov Russian Language Dictionary*⁵²: 1992 vs. 2007

For the purpose of my analysis I chose two editions of *Ozhegov Russian Language Dictionary* (hereafter *ORLD*), one of the most authoritative explanatory dictionaries of modern Russian language.

It was first published in 1949 by its author Sergey Ozhegov, and has been edited by Natalia Shvedova since 1964. Up to 1990 its following editions were stereotypical, i.e. reprints with no change in the content. With the change of political climate in the country and abolishment of censorship in 1991, the dictionary was significantly modified in order to reflect grammatical, stylistic and lexicographic changes which occurred over forty years. Dictionary's concept was changed from "the strict normativity to a developing category permitting alternatives in word usage"⁵³. The volume of the 1991 edition was half as large as its previous stereotypical edition. *ORLD* penultimate edition of 1992 became a #1 bestseller explanatory dictionary of modern Russian language which made it one of the most authoritative publications of this kind. Its full version is available in the free web access being most popular among Russian-speaking internet community⁵⁴.

The next modification of *ORLD* was undertaken in 2007 by its new editor L.Skvorcov. His goal was to recreate the concept of the dictionary prior to its alteration in the 1990s. As stated in the preface to the dictionary, Skvorcov

⁵² *Slovar Russkogo Yazyka Ozhegova*.

⁵³ "ot strogoy normativnosti k razvivausheysia kategorii, dopuskayushey varianty ispolzovaniya slova" – http://www.delonomer.ru/delo21_2.htm - accessed June 8, 2008.

⁵⁴ www.ozhegov.org – accessed October 10, 2008.

considered it necessary to return to the previous format and make dictionary “more normative and prescriptive”⁵⁵ and not so “permissive”⁵⁶ as 1992 edition. Another important change of the new edition, was going back to the original volume of the dictionary, therefore, reducing the number of defined words and illustrating examples. Being committed to Ozhegov’s principles stated in his preface to *ORLD* 1960 edition and partially reprinted in 2007 edition, the new editor believed that the dictionary should not simply “reflect contemporary word usage”⁵⁷, but rather “evaluate the normativity of linguistic material”⁵⁸. Similarly, its original author Ozhegov argued in his preface that linguist’s task was “to register and *explain* the facts of language”⁵⁹(emphasise mine) so that the dictionary can serve as “a manual for enhancing the language competence”⁶⁰ among the population. However, as language users might “deviate from the correctness and purity of Russian language”⁶¹, the author made a request to all readers to notify him if they “detected [such deviations] in speech or writing”⁶², as he believed “maintaining the language competence [to be] a nationwide duty”⁶³ (*ORLD*, 2007: 6-8).

In these two prefaces, language is clearly regarded as a code where each word has its fixed meaning. It is portrayed as a system separate from its users, and its integrity and ‘purity’ must be guarded from possible abuses/ misuses on their side. There are rules to be followed by language users in order for this system to remain ‘pure’ and functioning. Both Ozhegov and Skvorcov emphasized the authority and a special leading role of the dictionary in this ongoing process of “maintenance of

⁵⁵ “bole normativnym i presriptivnym”

⁵⁶ “rekommenduyushiy”

⁵⁷ “otobrazhat sovremennoe ispolzovanie slov”

⁵⁸ “ocenivat normativnost lingvisticheskogo materiala”

⁵⁹ “registriruvat i obyasnaiat yazykovye osobennosti”

⁶⁰ “rukovodstvo po povysheniyu kultury rechi”

⁶¹ “otkloneniya ot pravilnogo i chistogo russkogo yazyka”

⁶² “obnaruzhite ih v rechi ili na pisme”

⁶³ “zabota o chistote yazyka – eto delo vsego naroda”

language competence". Provided that dictionary production was funded by the State (both in 1960 and in 2007) editors, consequently, asserted the authority and leading role of the State as well. Such set of assumptions about language is very similar to those expressed in the recent linguistic debates, so the new *ORLD* edition can be clearly identified as a representative of the conservative discourse.

4.2. Formal sexism in dictionary

Before I proceed with my analysis, I want to point out 'formal' or 'conventional' display of sexism of *ORLD*, which is also typical for other Russian dictionaries. It is not sexism of the word meanings *per se*; however, it foregrounds and naturalizes the conventional hierarchy of genders reflected in the meanings. If the feminist dictionary is to be produced, it should also contest these sexist conventions. As far as I know, these points have not been made by other researchers:

(1) Hierarchy of grammatical genders

Adjectives are given in a nominative case of masculine form, followed by the appropriate endings of feminine and neutral forms, with one exception: if the masculine form is out of use, then an adjective is given in the feminine or neutral form. For instance, adjective *zamuzhniaya* [married/ covert], which is paronymous with *muzh* [husband] only refers to women, thus is given in a feminine form in dictionaries.

This hierarchy of grammatical genders remains present in comments or explanatory notes: when a rule or a definition concerns more than one gender, masculine is always mentioned first. For instance, next to the definition of *orphan*

there is an abbreviation for masculine gender and afterwards for feminine in order to specify that a given noun can be used to denote either female or male.

(2) Hierarchy of sexes

Likewise, when both sexes are mentioned together in one example, note or comment, they are always listed in the same hierarchical order: first male and then female (“men and women”, “boys and girls”, “male and female”, “father and mother” and so on, except for the loan-translated “ladies and gentlemen”). It is noteworthy that such convention is nowhere overtly prescribed, yet such usage is fixed in most Russian dictionaries.

4.3. Analysis of dictionary definitions

In order to trace changes in the constructed meanings of gender in the two editions of *ORLD*, I made a rather narrow list of words to be analyzed:

- ❖ *[biological] sex/ gender/ sexuality*;⁶⁴
- ❖ two genders: *woman/ man*⁶⁵;
- ❖ parallel forms denoting female/ male: *baba [dame, old woman]/ muzhik [guy, bloke], young woman/ young man*⁶⁶, *daughter/ son, wife/ husband, mother(hood)/ father(hood), and sister/ brother*.⁶⁷

⁶⁴ *Pol, gender, seks (seksualnost).*

⁶⁵ *Zhenschina, muzhchina.*

⁶⁶ *Devushka/yunosha.*

⁶⁷ *Doch/syn, zhenam/muzh, mat/otec (materinstvo/otcovstvo), sestra/brat.*

I use Cameron's analysis of the entry for *sex* in *Concise Oxford Dictionary* from her book *Language and Sexuality* (2003: 2-7) as methodological guidelines for my analysis. I examine the underlying assumptions of the definitions and illustrative examples in order to deconstruct the meanings of 'gender' (as well as 'femininity' and 'masculinity'). I will compare the difference within each pair denoting *female/ male* and whether each entry has changed/ remained the same from 1992 to 2007 edition. Based on the analysis, I will make a conclusion about the 'integrated' meaning of 'femininity'/ 'masculinity', i.e. the broader picture of the way 'woman' and 'man' are represented, and the changes in these integrated meanings from 1992 to 2007.

4.3.1. Sex, gender and sexuality

There is a vast body of literature on the distinction between the terms *sex*, *gender* and *sexuality* in the Western feminist thought; however, I will follow Cameron's understanding of their interrelation as developed in *Language and Sexuality* (2003: 1-4). She emphasizes the new tendency within social sciences to distinguish socially constructed *gender* from biological *sex*, as well as preference for the word *sexuality* rather than *sex* for denoting sexual desires, in order to underline its cultural and not purely natural character. However, "the conflation of the terms remains pervasive": they are often used interchangeably within the broader audience.

The English word *sex* is translated as two different words into Russian: (1) when it refers to the biological sex (females and males) it is translated as *pol*, (2) but when referring to sexuality it is translated as *seks*. Therefore, the word *pol* in Russian does not have sexual connotations. There is also a recent tend of replacing *pol* by the loan-translation from English *gender* when it concerns social behaviour of women

and men. However, the word *gender* is not widely accepted yet, so that *pol* is often used to denote both biological and socially constructed phenomena.

The word *seks* and its derivative adjective *seksualny* are used for denoting sexual drives, desires and all connected to sexuality. However, in the Soviet era speaking directly about sexuality was considered inappropriate, so these words were not of much use, and the adjective *seksualny* [sexual] was replaced by the euphemism *polovoy* (a derivative from *pol*). At first this adjective *polovoy* referred to the issues connected to the sexes: such as in *polovoy vopros* [a woman's question]. However with time it gained the sexual connotations. This was a polite way to speak of sexual relations without actually using words 'sex'/ 'sexuality'. Now the words *polovoy* and *seksualny* are used as synonyms and are both translated as 'sexual' into English, whereas *polovoy* has additional meanings as 'genital' and 'reproductive'.

Thus, it is a rather paradoxical situation that the noun *pol* does not have sexual connotations and only refers to the biological dimorphism or sociocultural 'being a woman' or 'being a man'; whereas its derivative adjective is used mostly to signify sexuality or relation to reproductive system.

ORLD provides most words with both a definition, and illustrative examples – “most common expressions intended to better explain the meaning of the word”⁶⁸. A word can be given without a separate definition, in the same entry with the defined 'basic word' only if (1) the undefined word is derivative from the 'basic' given with a

⁶⁸ Taken from the 'technical instruction for users', *ORLD* (2007), p.13.

definition, and (2) the undefined word gives a different shade of meaning “only due to its reference to a different grammatical category”.⁶⁹

Now, if we turn to the *ORLD-92*⁷⁰ entry for **pol**, it reads as⁷¹:

either of two genetically and physiologically opposed divisions
(men and women; male or female) of living beings or organisms

The entry also contains an adjective *polovoy*, which does not have a separate definition. Therefore, adjective *polovoy* must have the same meaning as its basic noun *pol*, except for its “different grammatical category”, in other words the fact that it is an adjective and not a noun.

The adjective is provided with two examples, which according to the technical instruction are most commonly used expressions meant to better explain its proper/conventional usage: *polovye priznaki* [sexual characters], *polovoy organ* [genital organ]. Therefore, considering the lack of separate definition, *polovoy* must refer to something related to one of the two sexes, which are “genetically and physiologically opposed”. Apparently, these examples illustrate that it is namely sexual characters and genitals that are so different in female and male physiology. The fact that sexes are “genetically and physiologically *opposed*” (emphasis mine) refers to the underlying assumption of the complementarity of the sexes; women and men are

⁶⁹ Ibid, p. 9.

⁷⁰ Hereafter I will designate each edition of the dictionary by its abbreviation followed by the year of publication: *ORLD-92* for 1992 edition and *ORLD-07* for 2007 edition, accordingly.

⁷¹ Kazhdiy iz dvuh geneticheskii i fiziologicheskii protivopostavlennykh razriadov zhivyykh suschestv (muzhchin i zhenshin, samcov i samok), organizmov. *Muzhskoy, zhenskiy pol. Prekrasny ili slaby p.* (o zhenshinah; shutl.). *Silny p.* (o muzhchinah; shutl.) || pril. **polovoy**. *Polovye priznaki, p.organ.*

argued to be not only different but in fact opposite due to which they apparently attract each other (as in Russian saying, “opposites attract”⁷²).

The *ORLD-07* entry for *pol* is somewhat shortened⁷³:

either of two divisions of living beings (men and women; male and female)

The adjective *polovoy* is also given in the same entry with no definition and with the same examples of genitals and sexual characteristics.

Although *ORLD-07* does not label women and men opposite in the definition itself, the examples given to illustrate the usage of the word *pol* employ the same logic of sexes complementarity: *fair sex*, *weaker sex* (women; humour.), *stronger sex* (men, humour.)⁷⁴. Despite the note ‘humorously’ as possible indication of not actually meaning it, the normativity of the dictionary as attribute of any reference material of this kind, which was, moreover, clearly stated in the preface to the dictionary, once again emphasizes the complementarity of the sexes through these two traditional stereotypes of femininity and masculinity: men = power, women = weakness; beauty.

The word **gender** is not defined in either edition. In 1992 the word was not widely used yet, and 2007 edition simply does not contain it.

Now if we turn to the entry for **seeks** [*sex=sexuality*], *ORLD-92* defines it as “all that relates to the sphere of *polovoy* relations”⁷⁵. The adjective *sexually* [*sexual*] is defined as⁷⁶:

⁷² “protivopozhnosti pritiagivautsia”

⁷³ Kazhdiy iz dvuh razriadov zhivykh suschestv (muzhchin i zhenshin, samcov i samok).

⁷⁴ *Prekrasny ili slaby p.* (o zhenshinah; shutl.). *Silny p.* (o muzhchinah; shutl.)

⁷⁵ Vse to, chto otnositsia k sfere polovykh otnosheniy.

1 related to *polovoy* relations. 2 with strong *polovoy* attraction

The word *seksualnost* [sexuality] is given in the same entry with the adjective *seksualny* and is not defined separately, so we can assume it is also something related to *polovoy* relations or with strong *polovoy* attraction.

These definitions suggest that relations between the two sexes – the *polovoy* relations – are connected to sexuality, and so is the attraction between the sexes. Allegedly, females and males are not only opposite but that any relations that can unite them by the definition are bound to sexuality.

The *ORLD-07* entry for *seks* is missing. However, its derivative adjective *seksualny* [sexual] is defined similarly as in *ORLD-92*: “related to *polovoy* life”. Therefore, life of the two sexes (when together) must also be connected to sexuality.

Considering that words given in the same entry without a separate definition differ only by their grammatical categories, the fact that the word *polovoy* was not defined separately with the reference to its implied connection to sexuality, but was instead arranged in the same entry as its ‘basic word’ *pol*, implies that mutual sexual attraction of the two sexes is so self-evident that it does not require a definition. Only this way, if we assume that words *men and women*, *males and females* already embody the notion of compulsory heterosexuality, moreover, its omnipresence, it will be logical not to define an adjective *polovoy* separately because it has a meaning which has not been reflected in the definition of the ‘basic word’. However, if we turn to the entries for *woman* and *man* in both editions of *ORLD* we will not find an overt reference to heterosexuality. Thus, heteronormativity is implicit and beyond question.

⁷⁶ 1. Otnosiashiysia k sfere polovyh otnosheniy. 2.s silno vyrazhennym polovym vlecheniem.

Let us take a closer look at the definition of *woman* and *man*, as well as other words denoting male-female difference.

4.3.2. Woman vs. man

The entry for **woman** in ORLD-92 reads⁷⁷:

1 a person of the opposite sex to a man, she, who bears children and suckles them⁷⁸. – *A woman is equal to a man. A woman-mother. There is a woman in it* (as a hint that some shady tangled matter could not do without a woman; humour.) **2** a female person that entered marital relationship. – *She became a woman.*

adj. womanly – *Female sex. Women's diseases. International Women's day (March 8). Feminine kindness. Feminine temper*

The entry for **man** in the same ORLD-92 edition reads⁷⁹:

1 a person of the opposite sex to a woman – *Be a man!* (behave as a man should) *a man-to-man talk* (as men should talk) **2** such adult person as opposed to a boy, youngster – *The son has grown up, already a man.*

adj. manly – *Male sex. Male handshake (hard, strong). Manly gait. Act in a masculine way. Masculine temper. Men's conversation (productive)*

The first meaning of each entry is pointed once again at the opposition of the sexes; moreover, women are defined through their ability to reproduce. It may seem awkward that the word *childless* given in the same edition and defined as “someone who cannot have children” provides as its only example the expression “childless

⁷⁷ 1. Lico, protivopolozhnoe muzhchine po polu, ta, k-raya rozhaet detey i kormit ih grudyu. *Zh. ravnopravna s muzhchinoy. Zh.-mat. Ischite zhenschinu!* (govoritsia kak namek na to, chto kakoe-n. neyasnoe, zaputannoe delo ne oboshlos bez zhenskogo uchastiya; shutl.) 2. Lico zhenskogo pola, vstupivshee v brachnye otnosheniya. *Ona stala zhenschinoy. || pril. Zhenskiy. Zh. pol. Zh. bolezni. Mezhdunarodny zh.den (8 Marta)*

⁷⁸ I realize this translation is rather clumsy but I want to keep it as close to the original as possible.

⁷⁹ 1. Lico, protivopolozhnoe zhenschine po polu. *Bud muzhchinoy!* (vedi sebia tak, kak podobaet muzhchine). *Pogovorim kak m. s muzhchinoy* (kak podobaet muzhchinam) 2. Takoe vzrosloe lico, v otlichie ot malchika, yunoshi. – *Syn vyros, uzhe sovsem m. || pril. muzhskoy. M. pol.*

woman". Therefore, a woman is defined through her ability or *inability* to have children. Also, as it follows from the previous entry *pol*, women and men are different in the first place by their genitals, thus, the example *women's diseases* must refer to women's reproductive system. On the other hand, men's ability to procreate is not mentioned in the entry at all. There is no such expression as *men's diseases*, I suppose not because men never have problems with their reproductive system, but because such problems are not considered as determinative to their being.

Examples for the first meaning of both *woman* and *man* and for their derivative adjectives suggest that women and men are opposite not only because of their physiology and genes (as we already know from previous definitions). These physiological and genetic differences must cause other differences as well; in these examples women and men are shown to be different (and opposite) in tempers, the way they walk, shake hands, talk and behave. Men are shown as having a special code of 'manly' behaviour apparently known to everyone (or, possibly, known only to men if we suggest that the alleged reader, i.e. the addressee of the dictionary, is male), as the examples give no further explanation of what it actually means to do something as "men should". Male here is equated with productivity/ strength, female – with ability to care and kindness. These examples correspond with the common myths that "women like to talk, but men prefer action to words" with all these and other differences being "a product of nature and not nurture" (Cameron, 2007: 1).

It is notable that *ORLD-92* illustrative examples "A woman is equal to a man" and "International Women's Day", which apparently denote women's emancipation as a Soviet solution to 'the woman's question', were removed from *ORLD-07*. I think it is not because editors of *ORLD-07* wanted to get rid of Sovietisms: Soviet

euphemism *polovoy* denoting *sexual* remained, as well as *father of the household*⁸⁰ (in the entry for *father*); moreover, Sovietism, *Heroine Mother*⁸¹ was in fact inserted to *ORLD-07*. It seems more plausible that these examples were removed exactly because they denote a step toward gender equality.

The second meaning is not symmetrical either. Maturity of males is defined through the age: boys must grow to become adults; whereas maturity of females is defined through ‘entering marital relationship’, which I believe is a euphemism for [first] sexual relations: girls must get married/ have sex to become adults.

Now if we turn to the same definitions of 2007 edition, we will find that they are much shorter (as it was one of the declared objectives of this edition). An entry for **woman** reads⁸²:

1 a person of the opposite sex to a man. *Woman-doctor*. **2** mature, as opposed to a girl, youngster.

adj. womanly – Women’s diseases

An entry for **man** in *ORLD-07* reads as⁸³:

an adult human being, a person of the opposite sex to a woman
adj. manly – *Male sex*. *Man’s coat*. *Man’s hand*.

These two definitions surely have fewer sexist examples; however, they managed to preserve sexism of the previous edition and even introduced some

⁸⁰ “Otec semeystva”

⁸¹ “Mat-geroinia” – In USSR, medal and title awarded to mothers of ten or more children.

⁸² Lico, protivopolozhnoe muzhchine po polu. *Zh.-vrach*. 2. Vzroslyaya, v otlichie ot devochki, devushki. || pril. **zhensky**. *Zh. bolezni*

⁸³ Vzrosly chelovek, lico, protivopolozhnoe zhenschine po polu. || pril. **muzhskoy**. *M. pol*. *Muzhskoe palto*. *Muzhskaya ruka*.

more. The example of *women's diseases* as the only illustration of something that distinguishes women from men is an elegant way of defining a woman through her biology/ reproductive function without actually stating this in the definition *per se*. The example of a *hand* as a male distinguishing feature seems like a ghostly presence of the example from the *ORLD-92*, and even without shaking signifies male strength and reliability (as in 'a helpful hand').

Revised definitions reflect another significant change. Two meanings of the word *man* are now integrated into the one, where 'person' is changed into a 'human being', so basically man becomes an equivalent to human. Similar meanings of the word *woman* remain twofold. Revised definitions suggest that a woman is mature compared to a girl or a teenager; a man is mature compared to a woman. The fact that the male definition is written in one line separated by coma implies the expressions defining male are synonymic: an adult human being = a person of opposite sex to a woman. Consequently, by definition a woman can never become an adult human being. And the fact that male is defined as human makes masculine gender unmarked category: there are humans and women. *Woman-doctor* is a good example of this: there are doctors and there are women-doctors.

4.3.3. Female/ male parallel forms

Analysis of the pairs of words denoting 'woman' and 'man' will show a broader picture of the constructed meaning of 'femininity' and 'masculinity', in addition to the core pair *woman/ man*. Words in each pair are differentiated only by the gender and as such may be expected to have mirror-like meanings. Below I examine whether they coincide or, in fact have gained unequal additional meanings in the *ORLD*.

First pair presents a colloquial form for denoting the sexes: **baba** [*dame, old woman*] for female and **muzhik** [*guy, bloke*] for male. These entries remained the same in *ORLD-07* as compared to *ORLD-92*. Both definitions (*baba* and *muzhik*) are rather similar, denoting the colloquial nature of the word and their reference to women and men, accordingly. However, the entry *baba* has an additional meaning of “referring to a timid weak-willed man, wimp (iron.)”⁸⁴. Such specification suggests three things: (1) men should be confident and daring, and have strong character; (2) timidity and lack of will power are inherently feminine features; (3) calling a man ‘a woman’ is offensive for *ironical* is defined as “subtle sneer/ gibe expressed in the hidden form”⁸⁵, where *sneer/ gibe* is “offensive and humiliating joke”⁸⁶.

The first two points reinforce the common myths about masculinity and femininity as in previous examples. However, the fact that it is offensive for a man to be called ‘a woman’ suggests that women are indeed the second sex, and no man would want to be downgraded to that level. Repeated emphasis on normativity as the cardinal principle for 2007 edition suggests that calling men ‘a woman’ in order to offend them is not only common, but in fact proper/ desirable.

Examples of mostly used expressions given for these entries in both editions are confined to (1) “*he is a decent/ able guy, a man of action*”, “*that guy is not a bad chap*”⁸⁷ for *muzhik*, presenting reliability and action as inherently male; and (2) “*old wives’ tales (nonsense, rubbish, pure invention; colloq.)*”⁸⁸ for *baba*, denoting women’s propensity to chatter and talk nonsense. Note that explanation of the *old*

⁸⁴ “o robkom slaboharakternom muzhchine (iron.)”

⁸⁵ “tonkaya, skrytaya nasmeshka”

⁸⁶ “obidnaya shutka, izdevka”

⁸⁷ “delny on muzhik”, “muzhik on nichego”

⁸⁸ “babyi skazki (vzdor, vymysel; razg.)”

wives' tales expression is no longer marked 'humorous', apparently this time lexicographer in fact meant it.

Now I am will analyze a pair of words denoting women and men of younger age and compare the changes of the pair **young woman** and **young man**⁸⁹ in the two editions. Originally, these words were used to denote youngsters of either sex, so in principle their definitions should be symmetric. However, the meanings suggested by both editions of *Ozhegov Russian Language Dictionary* prove to be essentially different.

The definition of **young woman** in *ORLD-92* runs as⁹⁰:

1 female [person] at the age from adolescence to youth. *Young men and young women*⁹¹. 2 such person that has reached the age of puberty but has not got married yet. 3 a young maidservant, housemaid in manor house (archaism) 4 addressing a young woman⁹² (colloq.)

The updated version in *ORLD-07* is significantly changed⁹³:

1 female [person] that has reached the age of puberty but has not got married yet. 2 a young maidservant, housemaid in manor house. 3 addressing a young woman (colloq.)

⁸⁹ The words *devushka* and *yunosha* I discuss here are translated into English as *girl*, *young woman* and *guy*, *young man* respectively. Because of multiple meanings of English *girl*, I chose to translate the words under discussion as *young woman/man* in order to emphasize that they refer to youth and not children.

⁹⁰ 1. Lico zhenskogo pola v vozraste, perehodnom ot otrochestva k yunosti. *Yunoshi i devushki*. 2. Takoe lico, dostigshee polovoy zrelosti, no eshe en vstupivshee v brak. 3. Molodaya sluzhanka, gornichnaya v barskih domah (ustar.) 4. Obrashenie k molodoy zhenshine (razg.)

⁹¹ Note the conventional order of the words as mentioned in Section 4.2: feminine follows masculine.

⁹² Here *young woman* is not the same as the defined word under discussion [*devushka*], but in fact a literal translation into English [*molodaya zhenshina*].

⁹³ 1. Lico zhenskogo pola, dostigshee polovoy zrelosti, no eshe en vstupivshee v brak. 2. Molodaya sluzhanka, gornichnaya v barskih domah. 3. Obrashenie k molodoy zhenshine (razg.)

Meanwhile, the definition of *young man* is changed only by one word, from “a *man* at the age from adolescence to maturity” to “a *human being* at the age from adolescence to maturity”⁹⁴ (emphasis mine). These changes are symmetric to the changes of the entry for *man*: in 1992 *man* was likewise defined as an *adult male* opposed to a boy/ young man, whereas in 2007 – as an *adult human being*. Thus, the word *young man* in both editions only indicates the age and/ or maturity of a male. Again the same tendency of substituting male with human can be observed, although both *man* and *young man* in Russian can only refer to males and never to females or both sexes.

There are a few more points to note here. The first meaning of *young woman* in *ORLD-92* (“female at the age from adolescence to youth”) refers to the age and/ or maturity of the person similarly as the definition of *young man* in the same edition. However, for females adolescence is allegedly followed by youth, whereas for males it is followed by maturity. In *ORLD-07* such meaning is removed altogether, apparently a young woman is not believed to reach youth (or what is more, maturity), she only reaches puberty, i.e. readiness for sexual life whereupon she is expected to get married and/ or have sex (if we take that marriage is used here as a euphemism as previously in the entry for *woman*). Although her sexuality/ marital status is constitutive in a definition of both editions, in *ORLD-07* it seems to be the only criteria.

The third meaning of *young woman* with reference to housemaid is similar to *boy/ girl* being used when addressing slaves in the North America, no matter what age they were. What is notable here, is that in *ORLD-92* this meaning is marked as

⁹⁴ Muzhchina v vozraste, perehodnom ot otrochestva k zrelosti. → Chelovek v vozraste, perehodnom ot otrochestva k zrelosti.

archaism, i.e. word out of use, in *ORLD-07* this note is removed. Apparently it signifies that if there still are female maids, it is okay to call them ‘girls’.

The last meaning suggests that informal speech provides the addressing term for women based on their sex, although other dictionaries include similar meaning to the entry *young man*. So notwithstanding the common usage of a similar addressing term in regard to men as well, the both editions of *ORLD* suggest that it is namely women who should be addressed by the reference to their sex. In a sense, this both makes women a marked category and defines them through biology.

Now let’s turn to changes in the entries for ***daughter/ son***. They are concentrated around the mentioned above tendency of substituting male with human and making women a marked category. The definitions of *ORLD-92* for women and men are identical. The first meaning reads as “a female (male) [person] in relation to her (his) parents”⁹⁵. However, in *ORLD-07* the definition of *son* is changed into “a man or a boy in relation to his parents”⁹⁶. The second meaning in *ORLD-07* for both women and men reads as “a woman (a man) as a bearer of characteristics intrinsic to her (his) nation and/ or environment”⁹⁷. In 2007 edition both definitions are changed: *daughter* is defined as “a woman as an active member of society”⁹⁸, and *son* is defined as “a human being as a citizen and an active member of society”⁹⁹. Generally, the tendency toward turning *male* into *human being* is typical for many other words of *ORLD-07*.

⁹⁵ “lico zhenskogo (muzhskogo) pola po otnosheniu k svoim roditeliam”

⁹⁶ “malchik ili muzhchina po otnosheniu k svoim roditeliam”

⁹⁷ “zhenschina (muzhchina) kak nositel kharakternyh chert svoego naroda, svoey sredy”

⁹⁸ “zhenschina kak aktivny chlen obschestva”

⁹⁹ “chelovek kak grazhdanin i aktivny chlen obschestva”

Next let us analyze changes in the pair **wife/ husband**. In *ORLD-92* these definitions are mirror-like and both imply heteronormativity: it is “a woman (a man) in relation to the man (woman) she (he) is married to”¹⁰⁰. In *ORLD-07* the male definition remains the same; however, *wife* is described as “a *married* woman (in a relation to her *husband*)”¹⁰¹ (emphasis mine). Thereby, man remains defined as husband only with regard to his marital status, and woman becomes defined as wife generally and not only with regard to her marital status.

Another pair associated with male-female distinction is **mother/ father**. Both words have multiple meanings in *ORLD-92*, and due to the cumbersomeness of the definitions, I will not cite them here in full. Instead, I will only concentrate on the changes of the two editions.

In *ORLD-92* the definitions were rather symmetric, though with a few sexist notions. First, the expression “single mother” with explanation “a woman raising alone a child out-of-wedlock”¹⁰² is only provided in the entry for *mother*, so apparently there cannot be single fathers. Similarly, there is a “mother of many children”¹⁰³ and not a “father of many children”. Second, the word *father* has additional meanings not attributed to *mother*: (1) fathers (in plural) as people of previous generations (as in ‘generation gap’¹⁰⁴), and (2) people of power as in ‘the Church Fathers’ and ‘city fathers’. Both these meanings are rather exceptional and are limited to the words given in the examples. Therefore, it is not clear why they would be carried out as separate meanings and not merely explained as set expressions (as it is the case for many other words in the dictionary according to the user instruction), unless human

¹⁰⁰ “zhenschina (muzhchina) po otnosheniu k muzhchine (zhenschine), s kotorym/oy ona/on sostoit v brake”

¹⁰¹ “zamuzhniaya zhenschina (po otnosheniu k ee muzhu)”

¹⁰² “mat-odinochka – zhenschina, vospityvaushaya rebenka, rozhdenного вне braka”

¹⁰³ “mnogodetnaya mat”

¹⁰⁴ In Russian, ‘problem of fathers and children’ or simply ‘fathers and children’.

as a substitute for male and male relation to power are important for a better understanding of the word.

There is a list of significant modifications of both entries in *ORLD-07*.

The examples given for the adjectives *mother's/ maternal* and *father's/ paternal*¹⁰⁵ are altered. "Mother's responsibilities" (signifying social nature of motherhood) are changed into "mother's love"¹⁰⁶, and "father's care" and "father's order" (signifying both love and authority) are changed into "father's books"¹⁰⁷. Likewise, the example of "mother of the family/ matron (mother as a head of the family)" in *ORLD-92* is replaced by "affectionate mother"¹⁰⁸ in *ORLD-07*. So, in *ORLD-07* the traditional notions of parenthood with women embodying empathy/ care and men embodying wisdom/ authority are restored, and everything that does not fall into this differentiation is removed.

Moreover, from the other pair of the mirror-like meanings (*mother* as title for a nun, and *father* as title for a monk) in *ORLD-92*, only the latter is retained. The meaning of "being an origin or source of something" provided for both definitions in *ORLD-92* is also preserved only in the definition of *father* in *ORLD-07*. In other words, the additional meanings of the word *mother* are sorted out narrowing down to the biological function only.

¹⁰⁵ "materinsky" and "otcovskiy"

¹⁰⁶ "materinskie obiazannosti" → "materinskaya lubov"

¹⁰⁷ "otcovskaya zabota", "otchiy nakaz" → "otcovskie knigi"

¹⁰⁸ "mat semeystva" → "lubiashaya mat"

Yet two meanings of the word *father*, which denote its biological nature (“a male animal in relation to its babies”¹⁰⁹) or empathy (“the person looks after his subordinates in the fatherly manner”¹¹⁰), are excluded in *ORLD-07*.

Similar reasoning must have caused the changes of the mirror-like heteronormative¹¹¹ meanings of *mother* and *father* as “an addressing term for an old woman (man) or a wife (husband) as mother (father) of one’s children”¹¹² found in *ORLD-92*. However, in *ORLD-07* the female definition was shortened to “an addressing term for an old woman or wife”¹¹³, whereas male definition was transformed into “a *polite* addressing term for an old man”¹¹⁴ (emphasis mine). So, calling woman ‘a mother’ continues to indicate a reference to her children, even without explanation “as mother of one’s children”. Yet for man, being called a father is no longer connected to having children since the reference to marriage is eliminated. The additional description *polite* used in this entry is defined as “compliant with accepted social norms, in accordance with good manners”¹¹⁵. The fact that such addressing term for a man is represented as polite signifies that *father* here is used to address not one’s husband but rather a stranger and therefore, it alludes to a certain feature inherent for fathers. As it is clear from the previous meanings of the word such feature is authority attributed to fatherhood. So, in *ORLD-07* the reference to biology remains determinative for definition of women and is dismissed from the definition of men.

¹⁰⁹ “samec po otnosheniyu k svoim detenysham”

¹¹⁰ “tot, kto po-otcheski zabolitsia o svoih podchinennykh”

¹¹¹ It is heteronormative because it refers to heterosexual couples (mother and father) only, and does not include the rest, for instance, two lesbian women (mother and mother) who raised children together.

¹¹² “obraschenie k pozhiloy zhenschine (muzhchine) ili k zhene (muzhu) kak k materi (otcu) svoih detey”

¹¹³ “obraschenie k pozhiloy zhenschine ili k zhene”

¹¹⁴ “vezhlivoe obraschenie k pozhilomu muzhchine”

¹¹⁵ “sobludayushiy pravila prilichiya, vospitanny, uchivyy”

The definitions of **motherhood** (*maternity*)/ **fatherhood** (*paternity*) of ORLD-92 must have been considered appropriate by the editors of 2007 as they were left unchanged. The entry for *motherhood* reads as¹¹⁶:

1 condition of a woman-mother during pregnancy, child birth and breastfeeding/ nursing. *Maternity care* 2 an intrinsic to a mother sense of parentage to her children. *A feeling of motherhood*

Therefore, this definition carries out a sexist notion of ‘maternal instinct’, i.e. women’s biologically determined instinct to nurture children which once again asserts that female biology is destiny (Cameron Lost:25). *Fatherhood*, on the contrary is defined neither as condition, nor as a feeling. According to ORLD’s definition and examples, fatherhood is “a blood relationship/ kin between the father and his child”¹¹⁷, something that can be recognized and affiliated. It is a status, which refers to earlier concept of father owing his children until they reach legal adulthood.

Now, the last pair to analyze in this section is **sister/ brother**. I will only make notice of three modifications in these entries, without citing the entire definitions. Basically, the entries of the two editions remained very similar except for the few things. First, the meaning of “a person holding the same views, a companion, a comrade”¹¹⁸ attributed to both words in ORLD-92, remained unchanged in the entry for *brother* and was removed from the entry for *sister* in ORLD-07. This is another instance of eliminating the examples where women are described as politically/ socially active.

¹¹⁶ 1. Состояние женщины в период беременности, родов и кормления. *Защита материнства*. 2. Свойственное матери осознание ее связи с детьми. *Чувство материнства*.

¹¹⁷ “кровное родство между отцом и его детьми”

¹¹⁸ Единomyшлennica, tovarisch

Secondly, the meaning of *brother of charity* mirror-like to *sister of charity* and defined as “a man with a medical degree, who takes care of sick and wounded”¹¹⁹ available in *ORLD-92* was removed from the subsequent edition, whereas *sister of charity* was retained. Therefore, nursing is presented as an exclusively female activity.

Lastly, *ORLD-92* does not give the expression *our sort*¹²⁰ as a separate meaning of the word but as a set expression requiring further explanation and defines it as “you, we, they and alike (about women; condescending)”¹²¹ for *sister*, and as “you, I, we and alike”¹²² for *brother* (emphasis mine). Here we observe ‘Othering’ women: where males are defined through “I”, women are defined through “they”. Moreover, women are again presented as a marked category since it is clear from the gender of *sister/ brother* which sex collectively the definition refers to; however, editors considered it necessary to make a comment “about women”. This would be reasonable only if the expression *our brother* could apply to both women and men, whereas the expression *our sister* to women only. However, as it is clear from all other meanings the word *brother*, it only refers to males. Therefore, even when it is not the case, masculine nouns are represented as unmarked. Women are not only marked, they are again implicitly showed as the second sex since calling someone *their sort* is described as condescending.

ORLD-07 modifies explanation of these expressions making them mirror-like: “you and alike” and remove the note “condescending”. However, the comment “about

¹¹⁹ Brat miloserdiya – muzhchina s medecinskim obrazovaniem, k-ry zabotitsa o bolnyh i ranennyh; sestra miloserdiya.

¹²⁰ In Russian, differentiated by gender: *our/ your/ their sister* (*nasha/ vasha/ ih sestra*) for denoting women and *our/ your/ their brother* (*nash/ vash/ ih brat*) for denoting men.

¹²¹ “vasha (nasha, ih) sestra – snishoditelno o zhenschinah: vy (my, oni) i drugie podobnye”

¹²² “vash (nash, ih) brat – vy, ty (my, ya) kak i vse drugie mne, vam, nam, im podobnye”

women” for *sister* is unchanged. So despite some improvements, the markedness of female as opposed to male remains immutable.

4.3.4. Changes in the meanings of ‘femininity’ and ‘masculinity’

Analysis of the female/ male pairs enables me to reconstruct integrated meanings of ‘femininity’ and ‘masculinity’. Although present in 1992 edition, the differences between an integrated meaning of ‘femininity’ and integrated meaning of ‘masculinity’ become much more salient and systematic in 2007 edition. In short, they could be defined as following:

(1) Female biology as destiny

Defining women through their reproductive function and sexuality has proceeded from *ORLD-92* to *ORLD-07*. Additionally, any definitions or examples indicating male relation to biology have been cleaned up.

(2) Men are from Mars, women are from Venus¹²³

Common myth that women and men are fundamentally different in the way they act and communicate has not only remained in 2007 edition; it has been made much more salient. Women are defined through their empathy and verbal skills: they are shown as caring, kind and talkative. On the other hand, men are defined through their actions: they are shown as reliable, mature, wise and responsible. All examples from 1992 edition which do not fall into these categories (such as “fatherly care” or “mother of the family”) have been eliminated from *ORLD-07*.

¹²³ This is a title of the book on cross-sex communication by John Gray (1992), which remained a bestseller for more than ten years, and as a result became a familiar reference even for those who did not read it. Also see criticism by Deborah Cameron: “Men are from Earth, Women are from Earth” in *On Language and Sexual Politics* (2006); *The Myth of Mars and Venus: Do Men and Women Really Speak Different Languages?* (2007).

(3) Women in the Private, men in the Public

The distinction between two domains, with private one being attributed to women and public one to men though partly present in *ORLD-92* becomes much more clear-cut in *ORLD-07*. Contrary examples from previous edition (such as “sister as comrade or companion” or fathers as caring parents) have been omitted in *ORLD-07*. Professions related to domestic sphere and/ or nurturing are defined as female, as well.

(4) Woman as Marked, Man as Human

In the pair *woman-man*, the latter is represented as an unmarked category, i.e. neutral, more frequent and broader in scope, according to Cameron’s definition (1992:241). This feature could be found in *ORLD-92* as well; however in 2007 edition it became much more consistent. Moreover, *male* is systematically changed into *human being* in a few analyzed entries as well as some others not discussed here, whereas *female* is remained unchanged.

So, notwithstanding the fact that 1992 edition displays all four types of ‘differences’ described above, many of its entries regarding female-male difference are symmetric and mirror-like. At the same time, these patterns are considerably intensified in 2007, where most entries are systematically modified in order to emphasize drastic differences between and polarity/ complementarity of women and men. In other words, *ORLD-92* contains separate sexist examples and definitions, whereas in *ORLD-07* they make a coherent vivid picture, according to which men are an equivalent to human (supposedly when you hear/ read ‘human’ you imagine a man), mature, active and responsible. Women, on the contrary, are regarded as a

certain subtype of humans. The nature of their 'exceptional' status is argued to lie within their biological differences, namely their sexuality and reproduction function being determinative of their whole being. Consequent female distinguished features allegedly include limited intellectual capacity and immaturity/ infantilism on the one hand, and their natural 'instinct' to nurture and care, on the other. Thus, women are argued to belong to the private domain where they take care of their husbands and children, whereas public domain is meant for 'citizens' and people in general, i.e. men. Taken into account the authoritative power of the dictionary, such meanings are made to look 'natural' and true.

Such representation of women is by no means new. It goes back to the times of patriarchal tsarist Russia as opposed to Soviet era where women were active in the work force and in the public domain, and a question for their equality with men was in fact a part of official discourse, however far from reality those declarations may have been. Considering the fact that *Ozhegov Russian Language Dictionary* is compiled by the Professor of Academy of Russian Philology, i.e. state institution, and issued by the state publishing house¹²⁴, and taking into account the systematic character and consistency of the definitions' revision, it can be concluded that State sexual politics of the language are aimed at the changing of the existing power dynamics between women and men into even more patriarchal and reinforcement of women's oppression.

¹²⁴ ONIKS Mir i Obrazovanie, Moscow.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

Three decades of feminist concern for sexual politics of ‘the’ language have brought significant results, from sexism being recognized as a social problem in the official political discourse to the creation of feminist lexicography. Through different attempts to reform sexist language, much has been understood about the nature of language itself. As Deborah Cameron (2006: 16) pointed out, meaning is not fixed but always contextual; therefore, mechanical replacement of sexist expressions with ‘neutral’ alternatives cannot guarantee elimination of sexism in language. In that case, contestation of word meanings institutionalized in the dictionaries and presented as ‘natural’ and true, is more effective for changing the prevailing power dynamics between women and men reflected in the language.

My research was an attempt of such contestation.

I analyzed pairs of words denoting ‘female’ and ‘male’ of two editions of *Ozhegov Russian Language Dictionary* in order to examine the constructed meaning of gender. I placed my analysis in the context of the recent debates on the Russian language, in which the Russian Government plays the leading role. The dominant discourse in the debate is centred on the campaign for ‘language purity’. The Russian language codified in grammar books, dictionaries, and also in the texts of classic world famous Russian literature (mostly 19th-mid 20th centuries) is argued to be the ‘true and genuine’ Russian language. ‘Language purity’, i.e. strict compliance with the institutionalized rules of ‘proper’ grammar use and word meanings, is believed to guarantee ‘health and prosperity’ of the nation; however, if the rules are not followed, the language is argued to be under a threat of being destroyed, and so

is the nation itself. Therefore, every conscious Russian citizen is argued to be obliged to engage into the ‘fight for language purity’

Within the nationwide campaign for the language purity, recently launched by the Government, dictionaries have been revised in order to reflect this mentioned ‘genuine and pure’ Russian language. *Ozhegov Russian Language Dictionary*, which I chose for my analysis, has also been revised “to become more normative”¹²⁵, in other words not to show the common usages as previous 1992 edition allegedly did, but to prescribe how words should be used. To trace the influence of the conservative discourse of debates on the dictionary meaning construction, I compared this most recent revised 2007 edition of the dictionary with its previous 1992 edition.

Analysis of the underpinning assumptions in the revised entries revealed drastic systematic changes in the meaning construction of gender. Separate sexist definitions and examples of 1992 edition have been methodically changed, so that the new constructed meanings of ‘femininity’ and ‘masculinity’ as constituents of gender have become much more patriarchal in their nature. Thus, the Russian State has been using moral panic centred around the problem of alleged ‘language corruption’ not only for gaining political influence within CIS through strengthening the status of Russian language, but also as a part of conservative anti-feminist sexual politics of the language within the country itself. Therefore, the obsessive recent debate on language has been used as a justification for such drastic shift in the gender order of Russian society.

¹²⁵ *ORLD* (2007: 6).

I think the analysis of the revised meanings of sexuality in these two editions of *ORLD* would significantly supplement my findings as gender and sexuality are so closely interconnected in the power dynamic between sexes. Moreover, similar analysis of other Russian dictionaries, which have been revised in recent years, would create a deeper understanding of the State sexual politics of the language. I believe such research is a necessary first step towards an organized feminist political activity for advocating change in the prevailing arrangement between women and men in Russia.

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