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## THEORETICAL AND LINGUISTIC FOUNDATIONS OF THE STUDY OF THE CONCEPT OF "WOMAN" IN THE MODERN LINGUISTIC AND CULTURAL SPACE

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### Abstract

The article examines the theoretical and linguistic foundations of the study of the concept of "woman" in the context of rapid sociocultural transformations of the 21st century. The cognitive, linguocultural, discursive, and genderlabeled parameters of the concept are analyzed, and current trends in its representation in language, media discourse, and digital communication are identified. Special attention is paid to changing the value structure of the concept under the influence of global processes – digitalization, transformation of gender roles, strengthening of female agency, and expansion of the public space of the female voice.

**Keywords:** *the concept of "woman", cognitive linguistics, media discourse, digital identity, gender representation, cultural linguistics*

Modern humanitarian knowledge is undergoing a period of intense transformation associated with digitalization, mediatization, and the restructuring of social institutions. In these conditions, the concept of "woman" acquires particular significance as a dynamic cognitivediscursive unit that reflects not only cultural traditions but also new forms of social subjectivity (Lakoff G., 1987). The theoretical and linguistic study of this concept requires an interdisciplinary approach combining cognitive linguistics, gender studies, media linguistics, and cultural studies, since it is at the intersection of these fields that contemporary interpretations of female

identity are formed (Cameron D., 2007; Butler J., 1990).

Traditionally, the concept of "woman" has been viewed as a culturally loaded structure comprising conceptual, figurative, and value components. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, however, its content is undergoing substantial changes. The conceptual component is expanding due to the emergence of new social roles related to professional selfrealization, leadership, digital participation, and involvement in global communication processes. The figurative component is also being transformed: whereas earlier stereotypical visual and symbolic models dominated, today they are being

replaced by multilayered, hybrid, and variable images shaped by the media environment (Gill R., 2007). The value component of the concept is becoming more dynamic, reflecting democratization processes, the strengthening of female agency, and growing attention to issues of equality and representation (Butler J., 1990; McRobbie A., 2009).

Digital media culture plays a decisive role in actualizing the concept of “woman”. Social networks, video platforms, news aggregators, and online communities create new discursive spaces in which a woman is not merely an object of description but an active subject of meaning production. In the digital environment, new models of female identity are emerging: the professional woman, the womanleader, the influencer woman, the activist woman, and the contentcreator woman. These models are not only fixed by language but are actively constructed through discursive practices such as selfpresentation, visual storytelling, public statements, and participation in social movements (Analytical articles from BBC News, The Guardian, Meduza (2019–2025)).

Language thus becomes a tool for forming and disseminating new meanings related to female subjectivity. Modern media discourses demonstrate a tendency toward the desexualization and depaternalization of language, which is reflected in the choice of nominations, metaphorical models, and communicative strategies. Women are increasingly described through professional qualities, competence, and leadership abilities rather than traditional gender roles. In public communication, the use of diminutive forms, emotionally colored epithets, and paternalistic expressions is decreasing. Instead, neutral, equal, and functional nominations are becoming more common, emphasizing the social significance of women’s participation in various spheres of life (Butler J., 1990).

The cognitive aspect of studying the concept of “woman” involves analyzing mental structures that shape ideas about femininity. These structures are becoming more flexible and open, influenced by global cultural processes. Female identity is no longer static or unambiguous; it becomes hybrid, multilayered, and intersecting with professional, ethnocultural, digital, and social identities. As a result, the concept of “woman” acquires the

properties of dynamism, polyfunctionality, and interdiscursivity.

The linguocultural approach makes it possible to identify differences in the representation of the concept across cultural traditions. In Eastern cultures, emphasis is placed on family roles and harmony; in Western cultures – on individualism and professional selfrealization; in the post Soviet space, a synthesis of traditional and modernist models is observed. However, digital media culture gradually smooths out these differences, forming global discourses of femininity in which local features intertwine with universal trends. Modern research pays special attention to metaphorical models of the concept of “woman”. Whereas earlier metaphors of care, gentleness, and emotionality prevailed, today metaphors reflecting activity, strength, strategy, and innovation are increasingly used.

Women are metaphorically described as creators, leaders, navigators, and architects of change. These metaphors capture new social expectations and value orientations associated with the expansion of female agency. Contemporary literature actively participates in rethinking the concept of “woman”. In the works of Olga Tokarchuk, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, and Lyudmila Ulitskaya, female identity is portrayed as a multilayered structure encompassing personal, cultural, and social dimensions. For example, in Ulitskaya’s novel *Sincerely Yours, Shurik*, female characters demonstrate diverse life strategies, and the author emphasizes their ability to make independent choices and resist social expectations (Tokarchuk O., 2014).

In Adichie’s *Purple Hibiscus*, the heroine transitions from a suppressed role to active subjectivity, which is reflected in her speech strategies: from silence to confident statements. This illustrates how language captures internal transformations of female identity. Artistic texts of the 21<sup>st</sup> century often employ metaphors of power, movement, and creation. Women are described as “architects of their own destiny”, “navigators in a complex world”, and “growth points”, reflecting new social expectations and value orientations.

Modern journalism also plays an important role in shaping new models of female identity. Analytical materials published by

BBC, The Guardian, Meduza, and other outlets increasingly portray women as experts, opinion leaders, and participants in political processes. Articles about women scientists, doctors, and entrepreneurs emphasize their professional competence rather than traditional roles. In news coverage of social movements – for example, campaigns against violence – women appear as active agents, organizers, and initiators of change. The language of such materials is characterized by neutrality, respect, and the rejection of paternalistic constructions (McRobbie A., 2009).

Another important dimension in the study of the concept of “woman” is the analysis of communicative practices that shape female identity in various types of discourse. In institutional discourse – political, medical, educational – the representation of women is often regulated by formal norms, professional standards, and role expectations. Here, the linguistic image of a woman is constructed through terminology, official nominations, and genrespecific communicative strategies. In contrast, everyday discourse, including interpersonal communication and informal digital interaction, demonstrates greater variability and emotional expressiveness. It is in these contexts that linguistic markers of solidarity, support, and shared experience emerge, contributing to the formation of collective female identity.

In contemporary digital communication, multimodality plays a decisive role: text is combined with images, emojis, audio messages, and short videos, creating complex semiotic structures. These multimodal practices significantly influence the conceptualization of “woman”, as visual and auditory elements often reinforce or challenge linguistic meanings. For example, visual narratives on social media may emphasize empowerment, professionalism, or activism, while com-

ments and captions provide interpretative frameworks that shape public perception. The interaction between linguistic and non-linguistic signs expands the boundaries of the concept, making it more dynamic and contextdependent.

Furthermore, the study of the concept of “woman” requires attention to sociolinguistic variables such as age, social status, professional sphere, and cultural background. Women from different generations construct their identities through distinct linguistic strategies: younger women tend to use digital slang, hybrid forms, and globalized vocabulary, while older generations rely on more traditional linguistic norms. Professional discourse also influences identity construction: women in science, medicine, or public administration often adopt terminology and communication styles that emphasize expertise and authority. These sociolinguistic differences demonstrate that the concept of “woman” is not homogeneous but consists of multiple subconcepts shaped by social experience and communicative practices.

Thus, the theoretical and linguistic study of the concept of “woman” in the context of 21<sup>st</sup> century digital media culture reveals profound changes in the structure of modern society. The concept becomes dynamic, multilayered, and culturally significant, reflecting the transformation of gender roles, the strengthening of female agency, and the emergence of new identity models. Language, as the primary means of fixing and constructing meanings, plays a key role in these processes, providing representation of new social realities and cultural trends. Today, the study of the concept of “woman” is not only a linguistic task but also an essential element of analyzing contemporary sociocultural changes, making this topic highly relevant for humanitarian scholarship.

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