

GENDER-MARKED AGE STEREOTYPES IN ENGLISH PROVERBS AND SAYINGS

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Gender stereotypes are characteristic features of male/female gender group behavior that are expected by a society (Olikova et al, 2010). In fact, gender stereotyping is rooted in the human habit of returning to multiply repeated situations and reactions on them. This behavior is fixed in the human consciousness as standard schemes and models of thinking

The traditional stereotype of a woman was that she was in charge of all domestic matters. Women were commonly described as being dependant, emotional, passive, sensitive, innocent, weak and nurturing. On the other hand, the stereotype of a man was that he was out in the work force being the main financial provider for his family. Men were commonly described as being independent, non-emotional, aggressive, tough-skinned, competitive, strong and self-confident. In today's modern society these traditional stereotypes are constantly being challenged however gender stereotyping still occurs in English as well as in Ukrainian proverbs and sayings.

Gender stereotypes in the Ukrainian language are viewed as ethnic stereotypes and perform the function of accumulating and systemizing the social, cultural and historical experiences of the Ukrainian people. Feminine Gender Stereotypes (FGS) and Masculine Gender Stereotypes (MGS) are extremely prevalent in the sphere of politics (FGS: *Women in state affairs are like monkeys in glass-houses. Чоловік рядить світом, а жінка – чоловіком.* MGS: *The man who can govern a woman can govern a nation. Чоловіки правлять світом.*), family and household (FGS: *The wife is the key of the house. Місце жінки – вдома.* MGS: *The father is the guest who best becomes the table. Той, у кого немає жінки, є несправжнім чоловіком.*) and social roles (FGS: *The mother-in-law remembers not that she was a daughter-in-law. Красна жінка для людей, погана – для чоловіка.* MGS: *Honest men marry soon, wise men not at all. Сорочки нема, а женитися гадає.*).

Age is the other important factor for social interaction and social organization (Halapchuk, 2000). Gender-marked age stereotypes are widely accepted beliefs held about certain age that are perceived as being appropriate for women and men.

In terms of status, age is important in different ways. First, like gender, age is an

ascribed characteristic. At any particular moment, we are a specific age. And when “male” age is obvious, “female” is almost often hidden (*A man is as old as he feels, a woman is as old as she looks/ as she feels like admitting. Чоловік такий старий як себе почуває, а жінка – як виглядає.*). MGSs present an image of a stupid *young* person and wise *old* one (*To woo is a pleasure in young men, a fault in old. You can't fool the old man. Men grow weaker and wiser. Старого не обдуриш. Чоловіки з віком розумнішають.*). FGSs bear the humorous attitude towards women (*The longest five years in a woman's life is between twenty nine and thirty. Найдовші п'ять років у житті жінки – від двадцяти дев'яти до тридцяти років.*).

Age becomes a criterion according to which a certain status is automatically assigned to us at every stage in our lives (*He that marries late, marries ill. Хороший парубок, хоч води напийся, та й досі не женився!*).

A second point consists of the fact that age, unlike gender, is always a transitional status. We are constantly moving from one age to another. Age provides a kind of cultural roadmap of our lives—a notion of where we should be going and what we should be doing at a particular point in our life. Every culture contains norms about what is appropriate behavior at various periods in the course of life, and defines the usual set of passages or transitions from one age to another (*FGS: A woman is an angel at ten, a saint at fifteen, a devil at forty and a witch at fourscore. MGS: An old man is twice a boy.*). Moving from one age status to another is accomplished by socialization to age-appropriate behavior.

Family roles are also subject to changing definitions of age-appropriateness (*FGS: A wise woman never outsmarts her husband. MGS: As bad as marrying the devil's daughter and living with the old fool. Парубок жениться - любу бере, вдовець жениться - хто за нього йде.*).

In both languages the mechanisms of stereotypisation involve subjective evaluation that is reflected in their respective proverbs and sayings.

References

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