Connotation of the lexemes “dame” and “lady” from feminist perspective

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Abstract. The Russian lexemes « dame » and « lady » which were borrowed from European languages to designate wealthy, educated and high society women became assimilated in the Russian language and culture. The words gave rise to culture-oriented collocations (кавалерственная дама/ chivalry dame), and developed new connotations, which the lexeme «женщина»/ woman does not have. In addition to neutral and positive connotations (“истинная леди”/ true lady), the lexemes acquired negative connotations like “дама полусвета”/ demimondaine dame, which indicate to the woman’s inferior social status (полковая дама/ regimental dame), highlight women’s weaknesses not inherent to men (автоледи/ auto lady), and stereotypical ideas of women’s low intellect (дамский роман/ love story). The inherent and adherent connotations of the lexemes «дама»/ dame and «леди»/ lady revealed through analysis are based on traditional stereotypical ideas about women’s social roles and imply evaluation of the woman’s performance in traditionally male spheres. Thereby, acquisition of negative and ironic connotations by the lexemes is conditioned in society denying women’s new functions and roles from feminist perspective.

1 Introduction

According to Merriam Webster dictionary the Word of the Year for 2017 was *feminism*. The public interest in the word and in its definition is proved by the statistic data based on the number of lookups for “feminism” and their spikes, which chronologically correlates with the events in 2017. The Women’s March on Washington in the USA and similar marches in the world represent protests against Trump’ Presidency, because Trump made a number of statements offending women. Trump’s political consultant Kellyanne Conway enhanced the public interest in the term “feminism” by arguing about different aspects of the feminist phenomenon. The issues of women’s status in the films *The Handmaid’s Tale* и *Wonder Woman* also provoked interest in feminism. Disclosure of incidents of sexual harassment from male colleagues and powers that be made feminist issues timely as well.

Feminism is a social theory of sex equality underlying women’s movement for liberation and strive for gender equality with men [1]. Being a multi-faceted phenomenon feminism is both a theory and a practice, moreover it recognizes the diversity of national circumstances and broad interpretation. For example, in Russia, feminism is viewed as a

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destructive force for traditional ways in relations between men and women and in women's social roles and functions [2]. For this reason, feminism in Russia is a component of the women's movement rather than an independent social practice. The feminists' key demand is to provide women with the social right: the rights to labor and education, the ownership right, the suffrage etc.

Feminism and gender-related issues are researched into in different branches of the humanities: philosophy, cultural studies, political science, history, sociology, psychology, anthropology, as well as in linguistics. Feminist linguistics aims to disclose and overcome the reflection of male social dominance in language. The issue is addressed in the studies by R. Lakoff "Language and Woman's Place" (1973), J. Kristeva (1995), D. Tannen "Talking from 9 to 5: Women and Men at Work" (1994) etc. The main areas of feminist linguistics relate to revealing gender asymmetry in language reflecting male dominance and with researching into differences between male and female language behavior. The practical achievement of feminist linguistics is reforms in language, such as replacement sex-biased words with gender-neutral ones, creating a more positive image of woman and femininity in language [3].

The emergence of feminities (feminine-gender marking in job titles: woman/ girl in *saleswoman/ salesgirl* etc., suffix -ess in *stewardess, hostess*) in a language marks another victorious step in feminism movement. However, feminities evolve in different ways: not all of them gain a foothold in the language, those which acquire a negative connotation for various reasons relating to methods of word-formation, the colloquial style some feminities belong to, for example докторша or врачиха (female doctor with pejorative suffixes 'ш' or 'их' expressing a negative connotation or lack of respect) [4]. Nevertheless, feminities are interesting phenomena for linguistic research due to their word-formation, semantics, stylistics, discourse features and sociolinguistic potential.

Along with this, there is another group of lexemes designating female beings as counterparts of masculine terms, thus making a binary opposition of gender-biased elements. Female and male lexemes are derived from different words: женщина – мужчина (woman – man), дама – господин (lady – lord), леди – джентльмен (lady – gentleman), сестра – брат (sister – brother), жена – муж (wife – husband) etc. Indeed, our hypothesis is that the "female" element of the opposition unlike the "male" one has a number of connotations related to the social status of women and lack of their social rights even though the rights are declared.

2 Methods

We will consider the connotations of the lexemes «дама» (dame, lady) and «леди» (lady) in Russian which are synonymous with the more neutral lexeme «женщина» (woman), functioning as the hypernym for «дама» (dame, lady) and «леди» (lady). The hyponyms «дама» and «леди» express a more particular phenomenon than «женщина» and can't refer to all women, so the lexemes «дама» and «леди» are defined through the lexeme «женщина» as synonyms with more particular meanings.

To provide the following data as the input for sociolinguistic analysis of the connotation of the Russian lexemes «дама» and «леди» from feminist perspective, we will 1) consider the lexeme etymology of «дама» and «леди», and the timeline of their borrowing and assimilation into the Russian language; 2) analyze the definitions of the lexemes from Russian Lexicon dictionary entries; 3) consider collocations containing the «дама» and «леди» components; 4) consider the linguistic, cultural and sociolinguistic context of their usage. The connotation analysis involves consideration of styles, stylistic forms, stylistic devices, emotional tones and idiomatic meanings which perform as connotators (lexemes and their meanings) [5].

It is important for our research to define the term “connotation” since it provides guidance and algorithm for the research. We build our research on the definition given by the Russian linguist Yu. D. Apresyan, who interprets connotation as minor but sustainable features of the concept the lexeme verbalizes, which contains the socially and culturally adopted evaluation of the phenomenon, object or fact. These features neither are incorporated in the lexical meaning of the word, nor result from or conclude the meaning [6].

Undoubtedly, the connotation is related to the evaluation of a phenomenon, so it is based on extralinguistic reasons and displays a cultural, social and historical nature. We argue that researching into connotation from sociolinguistic perspective involves outlining cultural, social and historical conditions and factors which contribute to the emergence and evolution of the word connotation. We aim to reveal the inherent connotative meaning (not depending on the context) and adherent connotative meaning (appearing in a particular context).

Analyzing connotations from feminist perspective also involves typifying the absence or presence of specific features, components or elements in the structure of lexeme contextual connotative meaning. These features may indicate women’s unequal status, diminishing their social performance through pejorative and derogatory components. Revealing implicit meanings is also relevant to collocations, proverbs and idioms where the context is sustainable and socially and historically based. Moreover, the idiomatic meaning is defined in dictionaries and known to most language speakers of a certain time period. The word «context» will be also used to refer to the socio historical context of Russia in the XVIII-XXI centuries.

Thereby, methods of research include the associative experiment method, sociolinguistic analysis, etymological method, psycholinguistic method, comparative analysis etc.

3 Results

The research into the connotation of the lexemes «дама» (dame, lady) and «леди» (lady) in Russian from feminist perspective results in classifying inherent social and cultural connotations of the lexeme «дама»:

- educated, cultured;
- wealthy, affluent;
- married or previously married;
- providing for herself;
- inferior to a man in social status (king, husband, suitor etc.).

On the whole these connotations describe women’s status in society where men are more socially active and the woman’s status and rights are dependent on the man’s.

The adherent connotations (contextual) reveal the following features of the lady/ gentle woman in Russian:

- low intellect (дамский роман / lady’s novel “love story”, дамский каприз/ lady’s whim);
- social role of a teacher in an educational institution (классная дама/ институтская дама/ school dame/ institute dame “female homeroom teacher”);
- emancipated in a certain degree;
- stereotypically gender-related (дамская сумочка/ lady’s bag “purse, vanity-case”, дамская комната/ ladies room);
- background (благородная дама/ noble woman, воспитанная дама/ mannerly woman, знатная дама/ grand dame)

- high social status (светская дама/ lady of society “socialite”, великосветская дама/ high society lady);
- sublime attitude (дама сердца/ one’s heart’s lady “female sweetheart”);
- age-related characteristics (молодая дама/ young lady, дама почтенного возраста/ lady in advanced age, пожилая дама/ elderly lady);
- appearance (интересная дама/ good-looking lady, привлекательная дама/ attractive lady, солидная дама/ trustworthy lady);
- occupation in the field of literature (литературная дама/ literature lady “woman of letters”);
- status of a kept woman (дама полусвета/ demimondaine).

The following phrases reveal a higher but a more dependent status of the woman in their connotations: «статс-дама» (stats -lady “lady-in-waiting”) as a wife of a high-ranking official, superior lady; «кавалерственная дама» (chivalry lady) as a wife of a high rank man, «полковая дама» (regimental lady) as a wife of a provincial military officer, female court dignitary, female court officer.

The next group of inherent and adherent connotations is applicable to the lexeme “леди” (lady) in Russian linguoculture:

- married woman of a privileged social stratum;
- wife of an English lord;
- one of high moral and intellectual standing (истинная леди/ true lady);
- strong-willed woman (железная леди/ iron lady);
- President’s wife or the country’s leader wife (первая леди/ first lady);

The following contexts reveal adherent connotations:

- style of driving as opposed to men’s typical style: (автоледи/ auto lady “female driver”);
- businesswoman combining masculine and feminine approaches in her business activity (бизнес-леди/ business lady);
- drugs (белая леди/ white lady “marijuana”, леди Хэмп/ Lady Hemp).

4 Discussion

It is important to research into the etymology of the lexemes «дама» (dame, lady) and «леди» (lady). The Russian word «дама» originates from the French “dame” with the same meaning via the Polish *dama* or German *Dame* (XVII century), earlier from *domina* “mistress, hostess” (late Latin *domna*), earlier from *domus* “house”, earlier from Proto-Indo-European *domo-/*domu- “house”. The Russian lexeme *дама* has been in use since Peter the Great’s times (first recorded in Russian in 1701). The borrowing of the lexeme occurred in the times of social and political reforms conducted by Peter the First. The reforms brought about significant changes in the life mode of the Russian upper stratum society which aimed to practice overemphasized courtesy in the ill-conceived European way opposed to traditional etiquette rules typical of the pre-Peter period.

The lexeme «дама» is defined in Lexicons through the word “woman” but it indicates a more particular type of a female. The definitions can be classified into five categories: 1) a woman who belongs to a wealthy, privileged or educated stratum of society; 2) a woman who one regards with respect, a well-mannered woman; 3) a woman, married or previously married as opposed to a girl or a spinster; 4) a woman or a girl in relation to her male partner; 5) the third senior playing card with the image of a woman.

In the first meaning, the main limitation factor is property, status or education of a woman, which correlates with the social rights the woman has an opportunity to exercise. The social rights the woman possesses are mostly provided by her father, husband or some

close male relative. The second meaning is related to the social behavior and attitude to a woman. In the third case the woman's status is dependent on her marital status. So, the transformation of a woman into a lady is directly linked with her financial situation, matrimonial and social status and level of her education. Consequently, the lady's status implies that the woman exercises the rights which the feminists advocate but, possibly, in this case the realization of the rights is guaranteed by the will of the man (father, husband etc.). The fourth meaning also implies dependence of a woman on a man, when the active person is a cavalier and the woman is a lady only in relation to the man, so the female noun correlates with the male adjective because the lexeme "chivalry" is mostly associated with a man. The woman's inferior position in real world is projected on the world of games, in which the queen takes an inferior position after the king, although the prototypes for the playing card queen were Ancient Greek goddesses and female characters from the Old Testament.

There are collocations in Russian with the word «дама», which date to the XVIII-XX centuries and result from social phenomena connected with transformation of women's social functions: кавалерственная дама (chivalry dame), полковая дама (regimental dame/ lady), классная дама/ институтская дама (school dame/ institute dame), музыкальная дама (music dame), дама в черном (lady in black "death"), белая дама (white lady "female spirit in white"), дама сердца/ прекрасная дама (fair lady), ученая дама (learned lady), дама полусвета (demimondaine lady), дамский роман (love story) etc.

The chivalry dame (кавалерственная дама) was a title granted to a female possessor of the Imperial Order of St. Catherine instituted by Peter the Great in 1714 in honor of the salvation of the Russian Emperor and the Russian Army mainly with the help of Catherine the First who allegedly bribed the Turkish Commander-in-Chief in order to save the Emperor and the Army. Following Paul the First's edict, maximum 94 women of the highest nobility could be bestowed the order. However, even by 1917, when the last Russian Emperor abdicated, the maximum number had not been achieved because the order was granted to a woman for her husband's or son's merits (for example, military merits of a commander) and was a sign and evidence of the Royal mercy, which Russian noble women craved for. The facts prove that the chivalry dame title testified to the performance of the husband, not of the wife thus diminishing her social role and indicating her social dependence on her husband. Nevertheless, historians state that noble women chose to marry unloved men just to be granted the order [7].

The modern connotation of the lexeme is burlesque or pejorative and implies an individual's pretentious attempts to be granted an order not for one's merits. For example, a headline in "Moskovsky komsomolets" informs that the chivalry dame Poklonskaya retracted the order granted to her in 2014 and indignantly returned it to the Head of the Romanovs' House. The author implicitly indicates to the insignificance of the order in present-day Russia and satirizes Natalia Poklonskaya, a Russian politician, publicly attaching importance to it. The Ruscopora website quotes a story in which the title refers to a man who, in the author's opinion, is not worthy of the order. The use of the feminine "chivalry dame" to designate a man undermines the man's social and professional status because the term implies an inferior position of a woman. Moreover, another component of the connotation in the discussed context is "to be undeservedly granted an order", which goes back to the XIX century.

Women whose husbands were of lower position such as officers stationed in provincial towns, were called regimental ladies (полковые дамы). Despite its neutral connotation the phrase implies a subordinate role of women because the woman is identified according to her husband's position and occupation although regimental ladies played a significant role in garrisons having a number of duties and responsibilities. The regimental lady had to

follow unwritten rules of moral conduct and behavior. So officers had to apply for permission to marry but they were not allowed to marry actresses, divorcees, public and political activists, or working women with the exception of gymnasium teachers at the very least [8], who still had to resign after the marriage. Also, an officer was obliged to provide for the family well. Consequently, the regimental lady was denied the right to labor. The author Olga Forsh in the novel *Palace and Prison* writes that a regimental lady in a provincial town lives a very boring life and the only entertainment is love affairs. Thus, the term “regimental lady” defines a particular type of a woman wholly dependent on her husband’s status, provision, decision-making and attitude.

After women had been integrated into social and professional activities beyond their homes there appeared a number of job terms or collocations to identify female employees or workers by their professions, jobs or occupations: *классная дама*, *институтская дама* (school dame/ institute dame “female homeroom teacher”), *литературная дама* (literature lady “woman of letters”) [9]. These terms reflect the new position of the woman in the male dominant society where the woman has to acquire the functions and activities traditionally associated with men.

The trend in using “dame” instead of “woman” to designate an emancipated woman is still topical and occasionalism with the dame components denote women who are engaged in male-associated activities. The dame in a phaeton is a woman who acquires spatio-physical freedom on the turn of the XIX-XX centuries and becomes geographically mobile. Dames in the fields pursued the exclusively male career of agronomists despite obstacles both of psychological and bureaucratic character, which prevented women from engaging into agricultural science and practice. Dames of ministry are a group of female clerics providing church charity during World War I. Overall, the lexeme “dame” was used to refer to the “male type” education some women acquired at that time. As is known there was no higher or professional education for women in Russia until the 1870’s. Before that time only educated gentry women were the sole beneficiaries of the limited facilities for female education [10]. As the word “dame” («дама») included the semantic element “educated” (along with “noble”), it was transferred to designate an emancipated woman.

School dames and institute dames constitute historically the first and socially the largest stratum of working women from “decent” (educated) families because teaching was the only acceptable opportunity for an educated woman to earn her living [11]. The lexeme ‘school dame’ (class dame) underlined a new status of a woman who was employed to teach girls in a school, gymnasium or any other educational establishment unlike female teachers who were hired to educate girls at home. Only after 1850s, the term “female teacher” in Russian started to be used in the wide meaning and finally replaced the term “school dame”.

Originally, the class dame was a teacher in a girls’ gymnasium whose job responsibility was to monitor the schoolgirls’ academic performance and behavior. According to linguists researching into gender-related language issues, the phrase «классная дама» (class dame) is one of the few idioms naming a woman as a socially significant person because in Russian the terms for jobs and occupations denoting a socially active person are mostly nouns or forms of nouns of the masculine gender. However, the idiom «классная дама» (class dame) verbalizes the traditional social view of the woman and her original social functions, that is raising and educating children. The job title for the man performing the similar functions was different and did not correlate with the phrase “class dame”. V. Korovushkin, who researches into anthroponyms, registers a historical example where the idiom «классная дама» is used by speakers of military school jargon in pre-revolutionary Russia to name a colonel in a mocking and sneering way [12]. Evidently, the colonel unsuccessfully performed the function traditionally associated with female jobs or his behavior was viewed as demeaning or humiliating for a man.

Even though the phrase “class dame” is associated with a woman who has an independent status (educated, employed) it implies limitations of social rights in comparison with other job titles. Anton Chekhov wrote that Tatyana’s day (January, 25) is a day even children unborn and class dames are permitted to get drunk. This example, although humorous, testifies to the archetypal image of the class dame who is viewed as an irreproachable and sin-free person. Ivan Bunin describes a class dame in the story “Light Breathing” who in spite of her adult age is the exact opposite to Olya Meshcherskaya, a young girl, because the class dame’s opportunities to be socially active and her life experience are limited unlike her student Olya’s. The class dame in the story is described as a socially immature and inactive person, which is conditioned by the requirements of her occupation when a woman has to sacrifice her social rights. Nevertheless, the career of a class dame was available to and common among dowerless girls who were destined to be spinsters and to survive without a man’s support.

The literature lady (литературная дама) is a woman related to writing, publishing and other literary activities. The connotation of the phrase in Russian implies a skeptical and ironical attitude of the speaker to the performance of a woman in that career, although the denotational meaning includes education, intellect and social activity components. The following example from The Ruscorpora website proves that the literary lady’s responsibility in the sphere of literature are vague and her achievements are dubious, which testifies to the woman’s periphery status in literature: *First the literary lady reads a report. Something like “Parallels between Dante Gabriel Rossetti and Esenin”. Even if there are no parallels.*

The adherent connotation of the phrase «дама сердца» (lady of one’s heart) or “прекрасная дама” (fair lady) is being adored and worshipped. It implies platonic relations with a woman who is mostly married and unapproachable. This attitude was cultivated in Europe mostly in the times of chivalry, when every noble knight had to cherish a beloved woman regardless of her or even his matrimonial status and to perform heroic deeds out of love for her. It was not only a passionate love but also a kind of role play according to which the knight had to perform a set of prescribe activities: to write poems dedicated to the beloved one, serenade her under her balcony, sigh and suffer during a long separation. The knight was particular about the lady’s possessions like a batiste kerchief, a flower from the lady’s hat etc. Nevertheless, the knight was not precluded from loving another woman. The examples prove that the fair lady was part of the game where the night played the active role, but the lady’s role was symbolic, and she was associated with the goal and fetish. So, not only her participation in the roleplay was passive, but also, sometimes the lady was not aware of herself being part of the roleplay.

The derivative adjective «дамский» (of a dame, belonging to a dame etc.) preserves the connotation of the noun «дама» (dame), develops or insignificantly transforms some of them. Professor V. N. Teliya enumerated some negative metaphors for the concept “woman” which are developed in the adjective derivative from “dame”: low-value female intellect and female creativity, which is verbalized in the phrases «дамский журнал» (lady’s journal) and «дамский роман» (dame’s novel “low quality love story”) [13]. The Lady’s Journal in Russia (1823-1833) is characterized as a light and airy fashion magazine full of dreamy illustrations [10]. As a popular genre of mass literature “dame’s novel” differs from “women’s prose” which is part of serious elitist literature compatible with the works of male authors. The main features of a successful love story are fabulousness (escapism) and the archetypal Cinderella plot [14], where the girl whose only merit is her good manners is passively awaiting a prince. The author of the love story can be both a woman or a man; the author has to follow the genre rules in writing a novel to produce texts for a woman of average intellect, world view and education. Nevertheless, the dame’s novel has greatly evolved since 60-70-s of the XIX century under the influence of feminists’

views and integrated some elements and techniques typical of women's serious and elitist prose.

The phrase “дамская сумочка” (lady's handbag/ purse/ vanity case) has inherent and adherent connotations. The adherent connotation is of ironic and condescending nature implying that frivolity, flippancy and narrow-mindedness are typical of women. The handbag is a woman's attribute which is characterized by chaos and the lady's paraphernalia. This is correlated with the woman's brain which is allegedly and stereotypically chaotic, so the phrase is a metaphor for the female brain. In contrast to the stereotype, Queen Elisabeth's handbag performs informative and coordinative functions and is a tool of communication with her staff.

“Дама полусвета” (demimondaine lady/ lady of easy virtue), who aims to imitate high society women's manners and mode of life, is characterized by specific social features, manners, behaviour and status [15]. The lexeme “demimondaine” was introduced by A. Dumas to designate high stratum of British and French society. The demimondaine lady moved in high society circles not by right of birth or occupation but by right of her sponsor or patron. That fact caused demimondaine ladies to develop new behavior patterns and ways to achieve recognition and success, which were not appropriate or acceptable in high society. So, demimondaine ladies formed a specific social circle which united women whose social role had changed and transformed.

Next, we will deal with the connotation of the Russian lexeme «леди» (lady) borrowed from English. The English lexeme dates to 900-1200 AD. Etymologically it goes back to the Anglo-Saxon *hlæfdige*, comprising *hlaf* «bread» and *-dige* «servant», with the literal meaning «female servant kneading the dough». The original meaning of the lexeme is “the mistress of the house”, “lord's wife” which was preserved but the lexeme underwent graphic and phonetic transformation in the Middle English period: *lafdi*. «The house» metaphorically means “bread” which the woman kneads, but the man (*hlaford*) eats and guards it.

From 1200 the lexeme acquires an additional denotational meaning: the lady is not just the mistress of the house and wife of the lord, but also a member of the privileged circle. The emergence of new political establishments in the XIII century gave rise to introducing new norms of social etiquette and redefining the role of the woman in society.

In early XIV century, the period of courtesy, the lexeme acquires a new meaning: a woman as an object of the knight's love. A French historian Georges Duby argued that introduction of courtesy improved women's state of mind and caused society to reevaluate the attitude to woman.

The Victorian period, which was marked with strict morals and high moral standards, brought about a new connotation of the lexeme “lady”. In addition to the meaning “a woman from high society” it developed the connotation “woman whose manners and personal attributes agree with high status”.

The upper bound of the final period when the meanings of the word “lady” is built coincides with the dissemination of English suffragists' ideas about women's emancipation in the 90-s of the XIX century. The suffragists were the first to struggle for women's independence and liberation.

It is difficult to identify the time when the English lexeme “lady” was borrowed into Russian because the word ‘леди’ is missing in earlier Lexicons, like Ushakov' and Dal's dictionaries. It provides grounds to claim that the word appeared in Russian only after World War II.

Dictionary entries from Russian lexicons provide the following interpretations of the lexeme: 1) polite and respectful form of address to the woman (to a married woman and a woman from the privileged estate as well) (T. F. Efremova's Lexicon, “The Dictionary of Foreign Words” ed. by F. F. Pavlenkov) 2) lord's wife; in Great Britain the title of a

nobleman's wife (a married noble woman as well, comp. First lady – Head of State's wife) (T. F. Efremova's Lexicon, The Dictionary of Foreign Words" ed. By F. F. Pavlenkov, S. I. Ozhegov and N. Yu. Shvedova' Lexicon); 3) female parent, manageress ("The Dictionary of Foreign Words" ed. by A. D. Mikhelson).

The lexeme "lady" displays polysemy: a form of address to a woman, a genteel woman, a title holder, a hostess. The polysemy does not only provoke interest but also poses a challenge mainly caused by axiological approaches to interpreting the concept "lady". Moreover, it is problematic to determine whether a lady possesses a certain moral quality by definition and not only by the title.

The submitted definitions of the lexeme "lady" reveal the male-female dichotomy which indicates, on the one hand, to the indivisibility of the masculine and feminine components, and, on the other hand, to the woman's dependence on the man.

Idioms with the "lady" component are not numerous in Russian.

The idiom "The Iron Lady" would be of etymological and sociolinguistic interest. As is known, originally it referred to the then British prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, but later it gained a foothold in the language and now it means any goal-oriented woman with a difficult temperament. The first record of "The Iron Lady" with reference to the politician was in a newspaper headline where Thatcher was compared with the iron maiden, a medieval torture and execution device, to describe the impact of the Prime Minister's harsh words about the USSR. Initially the article did not receive the proper attention because of the original language. When it was translated into English, the idiom got its referent, the Prime Minister of Great Britain, and the nickname is still applied to Margaret Thatcher.

The use of the idiom "First Lady" is associated with a President's wife, originally the US President's wife, later with other Heads of the State's wives. The connotation of the idiom implies having a status, dependent on the husband, and performing duties and following the code of conduct, characteristic of "true ladies".

The latter connotation goes back to the Victorian times, when the right image of a well-mannered and genteel female was formed. The concept was borrowed and took root in the Russian world view. It designates a woman, thoroughly pleasant in every way, what is more, well-educated.

Other two "lady" idioms, labelled as jargon and narcotic slang, are opposite in connotation and familiar in narrow circles: «белая леди» ("white lady"/ cocaine) and «леди Хэмп» (Lady Hemp / marijuana). Structurally, in both cases one component is "lady" and the other component is the colour of the drug or its name (hemp or cannabis).

We will consider two neologisms in Russian based on both denotational and connotational meaning and form of the borrowed lexeme "леди" (lady). In both cases the lexeme "леди" (lady) appeared to be more preferable and, therefore, more appropriate to the Russian lexemes «женщина» (woman) и «дама» (dame) due to its connotations: «бизнес-леди» (business lady) and «автоледи» (auto lady). The *Google trends* website displays the first query for «автоледи» in April, 2004 and for «бизнес-леди» in January 2004. The neologism «автоледи»/ "auto lady (female driver, woman-driver) has an ironic connotation which implies that the woman is not capable to drive a car properly, the way the man does. The Google queries for the Russian contexts of the word "auto lady" show that the lexeme is contextually used mostly along with the words meaning "drunk", "intoxicated", "run over", "traffic accident", "accident", "fighting", "speed up", "knock down" etc. The lexeme "lady" has a neutral connotation attached to the meaning "style of a fur coat" (hip-length fur coat, convenient for driving in cold weather).

The image of the Russian "бизнес-леди" (business lady) was built in the post-Soviet period, when a business woman had to be strong to survive. The research, conducted by A. V. Kokova, reveals a hybrid (both feminine and masculine) image of a business lady, i.e. the business lady displays the business qualities, historically and socially associated with

the man, and traditional feminine qualities [16], which neutralizes the “male-female” opposition.

It is important to pay attention to the contextual meaning of the lexeme «леди» (lady). The title of the novella “Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District” by the Russian writer Nikolai Leskov is stylistically a case of oxymoron: the image of a lady as a well-mannered woman contradicts the image of a murderer. There is no evidence that the author conceived this contradiction. First and foremost, Leskov associated Katerina’s personality with the Shakespearean character, not with the prototypical image of a lady. Both women, Katerina and Lady Macbeth, possess the qualities traditionally mostly associated with men, so the women’s characters appear to be more repulsive and tragic because there is a vivid contradiction between the words “lady” and “murderer”. Although Leskov advocated women’s rights to education, labor and self-development, he denied the existence of the “female” issues and described the possible negative consequences for the women who would dare to overstep the traditional moral boundaries [17].

5 Conclusion

The current events call for the need to reflect on and to describe the analyzed phenomena as well as the ways of their verbalization. Traditional ideas of women’s social status and role are being transformed, which influences the denotational and connotational meanings of the terms designating females and raise interest in researching into the phenomenon from different humanitarian perspectives.

The analysis of the etymology of the lexemes «дама» (dame) and «леди» (lady), and of historical development of their denotative and connotative meanings proves that originally in the source language the words *dame* and *lady* referred to the mistress of the house. The lexemes and concepts were borrowed into the Russian language and culture to suit the manners and etiquette of the period of courtesy. The terms were used to designate a certain group of women, i.e. noble, wealthy, educated, well-mannered and courteous. Eventually, the amount of connotative meanings has increased and the connotations have been transformed. A number of connotations testify to the woman’s inferior social status and highlight women’s weaknesses not inherent to men and stereotypical ideas of women’s intellect. Thus, the lexeme under analysis (“дама”/ dame, “леди”/ lady) have neutral, positive and negative connotations, verbalizing the woman’s image from different perspectives while the hypernym “женщина”/ “woman” is mostly neutral in connotation.

Further research into the lexemes «дама»/ dame and «леди»/ lady may concern their derivatives (ways of word-building), connotation, collocations brought about by extra-linguistic reasons.

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