

Old age as a basic concept of social gerontology: linguistic-theoretical aspect

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Abstract. This article examines the views of modern scientists on the phenomenon of old age, as well as the range of problems and concepts of special social science – gerontology, designed to solve demographic, socio-economic problems of aging. It is noted that social gerontology, which is a branch of the abovementioned science, also relates to the group of sciences of the linguistic cycle: culture of speech, stylistics, sociolinguistics and others. It is pointed out that the speeches of elderly people are characterised by specific lexical units and idiomatic expressions. Issues related to the old age and the ageing of man since ancient times have been in the focus of philosophers' attention. The article mentions the works of the famous statesman of the Roman Empire, politician, philosopher and orator Mark Tullius Cicero (106-43). The author concludes that the integration of social gerontology with linguistic science may lead to the emergence of a new scientific field, that will possibly be named linguistic gerontology or gerontological linguistics.

1 Introduction

The term "gerontology" was introduced as a scientific discipline aimed at studying the ageing process. The transition from youth to old age is a natural process that leads to the onset of old age and then to old age [3]. This term, translated from Greek, means "teaching about aging". It was first applied in 1903 in the book "Etudes of Optimism" by I.I. Mechnikov (1988). Aging in this science means the biological, social and psychological progression of human beings.

Thus, the great Russian scientist I.I. Mechnikov (1845-1916) is considered to be the founder of gerontology as a science.

Gerontology, like other sciences, has its own research object, which is recognized as a person experiencing the process of aging.

The designation of a person in gerontological science is a controversial issue. In particular, researchers use the following definitions:

- an elderly person (Vasilenko N.Yu., Lider A.G., Gasumova S.E., Minnigaleeva G.A., Ermolaeva M.V., etc.);

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- late representative (Glukhanyuk N.S., Gershkovich T.B., Marzinkovskaya T.D., etc.);
- the elderly (Shilova L.S., Dementieva N.F., etc.);
- elderly and old age citizens (Zozuliya T.V.);
- "people of the third age" (Zozuliya T.V.); (Third Age Men) (Adams R.G., Blieszner R., Laslett P., Sadkowska A., Wilde D., Fisher T., etc.) and others.

I.A. Sternin introduces the term "gerontos" (from Greek gerontos - the elder) to the one-word designation of a person experiencing the aging process, and justifies this by the fact that the semantics of widely used concepts such as "the elderly person" and some others may contain discriminative meaning [4].

In our work, we use the term 'older person' to describe a person experiencing the aging process because it is semantically neutral.

Gerontology is usually considered to be a science with a medical bias, as it is "a series of teachings on growth and maturation, maturity, aging and old age" [1]. In connection with the subject matter of the study of our work, we prefer to refer to the data and concepts of social gerontology, as it considers a person to be "a sociobiological being and therefore integrates humanitarian and medicobiological approaches to solving one's own problems" [17].

2 Experimental part

Social gerontology, as a science about the elderly, has a theoretical and methodological basis. The main purpose of this science is to study the entire system of elderly people's relationships: from family to social and community [12]. Thus, social gerontology is one of the branches of gerontology, along with geronto-psychology, geriatrics and others. It is important to note that the range of issues studied in social gerontology is also wide.

Social gerontology is interrelated with such sciences as sociology, anthropology, age psychology, ecology, etc. [12]. In addition to the above, it is also in contact with a group of linguistic cycle sciences, in particular, culture of speech, stylistics, sociolinguistics and others.

As you know, there is no developed language in the world that would not have a layer of foreign borrowings. The essence of the borrowing process itself is interpreted by researchers in different ways: some linguists understand by borrowing the process of "moving" lexical units from one language to another (L.P. Krysin, A.P. Mayorov, etc.), others – the words obtained as a result of the process of mastering foreign words (graphic, phonetic, morphological design) (O.S. Akhmanova, E.V. Marinova and others), the third is the result of economic, political and cultural ties with other peoples (D.E. Rosenthal). Now, more than ever, there is a real need for a detailed, in-depth analysis of this phenomenon on the basis of a fairly extensive practical speech and language material.

By analyzing the "path" of individual borrowed units, one can obtain valuable information about the pace of development of the language as a whole. Thus, the Russian language, like other languages open to mutual contact, is experiencing a rapid process of penetration of borrowings. In a short period, elements alien to the language can pass into its active lexicon, having gone through the process of mastering.

However, for linguists, it is not only the aspect of penetration of a foreign word and the process of its development by a borrowing language that is informative, but also the features of the functioning of borrowing in the speech of speakers. According to the specifics of the verbal units used by a person, one can determine his age, gender, social affiliation, etc. For example, the speech portrait of a representative of the older generation, in contrast to the youth, is characterized by lexical units expressing the meaning of advice, teaching, etc.

There are many factors that influence a person's use of a particular loan word. In particular, one can single out such social factors as age, social and communicative context, religion, gender, etc. In this regard, the functional and communicative loading of borrowed units in the speech of elderly people seems to be indicative and interesting. This topic is also relevant because representatives of the older generation differ from representatives of other age groups in a special way of thinking; social role; experience, the result of which can be considered wisdom; sometimes poor health, due to the deterioration of metabolism in the body, etc.

Over the past two decades, a direction has become more active in sociolinguistics, which has begun to pay more attention to the peculiarities of the language of older people. This can be explained by the general aging of the population in developed countries. According to statistics, in 1980 in the UK the proportion of the population that exceeded the retirement limit was 11.3%, and by 2030, according to demographers, the older generation will make up one fifth of the country's population [16]. All this puts on the agenda the issue of studying the problems associated with the aging process for gerontologists, the issues of speech-behavioral activity – for sociolinguists, etc. Following these principles, within the framework of this article, we made an attempt to study the features of the speech of older people using the example of borrowed words in the Russian language, more precisely, an attempt to determine the main functions performed by borrowed units.

The issue of borrowing elements, words and whole phrases from one language to another is one of the controversial issues in linguistics. By following the process of borrowing, one can obtain valuable information about the development of the language as a whole. This problem has interested and continues to interest linguists.

As I.N. Geranin, for the first time the problem of the interaction of languages, the interpenetration of elements was considered in the works of the famous Russian linguist of Polish origin I.A. Baudouin de Courtenay (1875) [7].

The essence of the borrowing process is interpreted by researchers in different ways. Some linguists understand borrowing as the process of “moving” lexical units from one language to another (L.P. Krysin, A.P. Mayorov, etc.), others – words obtained as a result of the process of mastering foreign words (graphic, phonetic, morphological design) (O.S. Akhmanova, E.V. Marinova and others). D.E. Rosenthal understands borrowing much more broadly – as “words flowing into the Russian language from other languages as a result of the economic, political and cultural ties of the Russian people with other states ... They can also arise as a result of snobbery, fashion” [13]. It should be noted that borrowing is not an excessive linguistic phenomenon. Their existence is functionally determined, including in the speech of the older generation.

To identify, analyze and describe the features of the functioning of borrowed units in the speech of representatives of the older generation, we selected more than 100 videos (interviews) from the site www.youtube.com using the continuous sampling method. As a result of the analysis, it was possible to establish that borrowings in the speech of representatives of the older generation are mainly used to denote new things, phenomena, outdated concepts, economy of language means, concretization, personal self-expression, euphemization, etc.

3 Results and discussions

According to L.I. Diachenko, now it is time to start conducting gerontological research from the perspective of philosophical and cultural sciences, which will allow us to implement new approaches to solving old age problems not only in the biological aspect

[5]. As a result, it will be possible to discover aspects of gerontology that have not yet been studied, in particular the integrative aspects.

The problem of old age has attracted the attention of philosophical scientists since ancient times. Mark Tullius Cicero (106-43), one of the most prominent statesmen of the Roman Empire, politician, philosopher and orator, dedicated a whole treatise to this topic, called "Cato Maior de senectute" ("On old age"). This work was published in Russian in 1974 translation with two other works written on social, political and philosophical themes ("On Friendship" and "On Responsibilities"). In his treatise "On Old Age", the philosopher reflects on the above mentioned phenomenon, the significance of this period in human life, the political wisdom of the older generation, their role in society and the friendship between people and their main responsibilities.

Cicero gives a description of old age and notes its sadness, which he believes is due to four reasons: it prevents activity, weakens the body, deprives almost all pleasures, and brings it closer to death [4].

It should not be inferred that Cicero's reflection on old age encompasses solely sadness. He goes on to refer to happy old age: first, "all mentors in the high sciences should be considered happy even if they have grown old and weakened," and second, "old age without middle-aged entertainment can simply be happy. As an example of a happy old age, Mark Valerius Corvinus, a famous Roman politician, writer and orator, mentioned the public authority that is considered to be the crowning glory of Cicero's old age.

In addition to the concept of old age, there is also the term "elderly age", which is a term that is controversial due to its choice and interpretation in science: some researchers understand it as synonyms and others as different age stages in human life, but all scientists agree that the biological, psychological and social boundaries of old age are conditional [9, 59]. With regard to the relationship between these concepts, we are of the opinion that they are synonymous, so they can form part of one synonymous series, where the first concept is the dominant one.

Nature sets for life, as for everything else, the measure by which old age is the final stage of life, similar to the end of a theatre performance [4]. As we can see, Cicero's life is associated with a theatrical performance in which he considers death to be the end point of old age, and Cicero does not mention the notion of longevity, which some modern scientists believe is regarded to be as the next age stage after old age.

As M.V. Yermolaeva points out, old age is the final period of life, the beginning of which is connected with the distance of a person from social and industrial activity [18].

This point of view can be referred as more acceptable, in case M.V. Ermolaeva does not mean that a person is retiring from social and industrial activities. In this regard, L.B. Nikitina puts forward the theory of "signals" that may include infirmity, illness, gray hair, retirement, grandchildren, etc. [9]. So the author connects the beginning of old age with the disappearance of certain physical qualities and characteristics that are ascribable to a middle-aged person (power, health) and the emergence of new attributes such as gray hair, retirement and grandchildren. In addition, the author points out that at present the beginning of old age is often associated with a person retiring from active work [9, 60].

It should be noted that we do not fully agree with this opinion of L.B.Nikitina, because a significant part of society is composed of people who are allowed to retire at the age of about forty (e.g. employees of the Ministry of the Interior, Ministry of Defence, rescue services, as well as employees of the civil aviation, such as aircraft maintenance staff). It is at the age of forty that their active working life may end, but in no theory of age periodisation is the age of forty signifies an older person.

If you add to the above groups of people those who retire for benefits and health reasons, there will undoubtedly be a lot of individuals. The beginning of old age with a person retiring is, in our opinion, an ambiguous question, as the birth of grandchildren. To

illustrate, a young boy and a girl marry at the age of 19-20 and, naturally, at the age of 45-46 they can become "grandfather" and "grandmother" of a 4-5-year-old grandchild. The paradox is this, is it possible to think that they have crossed the limit of old age? Besides, how will this question be solved for those people who cannot have children because of some issues or do not want to have children at all?

In our opinion, the transition to old age should be based on an age factor. The opinions of scientists who adhere to the views of the chronological criterion of old age (Erikson, Bromley, etc.) are notable in this respect.

As L.I. Diachenko states, by now a whole complex of issues related to philosophical (spiritual and moral) problems of old age has been formed. The initiated theoretical studies clearly need to be continued [5]. It should be noted at the same time that sociology and linguistics have a whole arsenal of research methods, partly integrated, which are used in sociolinguistics. Their application in gerontology will undoubtedly generate favourable grounds for full-scale linguistic gerontological research.

Z.E. Fomina and Yu.S. Konovalov understand old age as a period of life when a person experiences hopelessness, indifference and regrets about irrevocable youth [6]. If we approach the essence of this issue from the outside (for example, from the position of a representative of the younger generation), we may see a different picture of old age - the age when a person is honoured and respected, is the head of the family, feels the joy of the achievements of loved ones and etc.

G.A. Minnigaleyeva also discusses this divergence of views on old age, indicating that there is now a dual attitude towards old age: in some countries gerontophilic attitudes prevail (respect and reverence for the older generation), in others gerontophobic attitudes prevail (fear, alienation) [8]. The latter author seems to include Russia, where "the level of successful adaptation of a pensioner in society has decreased and the perception of this age by younger members of society deteriorated" [8].

In her article L.B. Nikitina also points out that the onset of old age in the Russian language consciousness is usually associated with undesirable, harmful, destructive and negative circumstances: illness, grief, psychological pressure from others and etc. In turn, the transition to old age under the influence of the above circumstances can be either gradual, rapid, early or unexpected [9]. Every person's transition to old age depends on the circumstances and individual characteristics, and this can often be due to the stereotypical perceptions of people and the mentality of certain people.

Describing the image of the older generation, B.G. Ananiev quotes Bromley's opinion, which characterises the age of old age as complete idleness in society, lack of any social roles, growing distance from society, gradual narrowing of the circle of loved ones, physical and mental insufficiency [1].

We do not fully agree with the speculation of D.B. Bromley, especially on the issue of mental disability, because "in the system of abstract values of the elderly, life wisdom comes first, which is expressed in the maturity of judgment when making important decisions" [3]. Moreover, in Eric Ericson's psycho-social development table, which we took as a basis for the periodisation of a person's life, the result of the progressive development of the older generation is wisdom.

When we talk about types of old age, K.S. Pigrov divides it into real and genuine. Based on the type of their ageing, people are also divided into real old people and old simulacra. Real old people have the right balance between desires and opportunities, and the old simulacrum has no balance, he is more selfish. Unlike the real old man, he fears his physical death [11]. In addition, depending on the type of old age, we believe that each older man has his own vocabulary, the usual individualisms. For example, a real old man, as we can see from the descriptions of Pigrov, differs from a not genuine one with his

spiritual wealth, which leads to a more subtle understanding of the meaning of a word, including foreign language, and its appropriate use.

Touching upon the question of old age stereotypes, M.M. Starikova notes that there are some contradictions between existing old age stereotypes [14]. According to G.A.Minnigaleeva, "the attitude towards old people was formed by various ethnic groups due to a certain historical fate, their mentality or national character, under the influence of the morality prevailing in society, based on religious and legal norms approved by the majority of the population" [8].

In our opinion, a stereotype is an accumulative representation, so it can be different for each person, which is due to the nature of the information that forms the basis of the stereotype. The mentality of the people also plays an important role here. For example, in the consciousness of each person, a purely individual idea of old age can be formed: in the consciousness of some people it causes compassion, in the second one it is intertwined with wisdom, in the third - with capriciousness.

It should be noted that the phenomenon of old age has now changed in most world countries: society has developed a set, in line with which the youth neglect the elderly, which has led the latter themselves to fear old age, the loss of respect from loved ones, which entail social decentralisation and similar phenomena.

E.M. Nikolaeva and L.I.Diachenko, comparing the phenomenon of old age in the West in ancient times and the modern view of it, point out that older people used to be considered the elite of society, were honoured and respected, but now there is an opposite view of old age: today's old people are concerned about their physical condition, problems of everyday life, they are experiencing a crisis of consciousness [10].

Investigating the specific features of speech of the older generation and young people, N.B. Vakhtin and E.V. Golovko argue that youth speech is more susceptible to innovation, and speech of the older generation is abundant with words that are out of use [16]. This means that young people are an innovative social community, while older people are a more passive society.

Representatives of the older generation differ from representatives of other age groups in a special way of thinking, a specific vocabulary with age-specific words, social roles, experience, wisdom, and sometimes poor health condition due to worsening metabolism in the body and etc. The use of the term "cooperative" in speech, which is borrowed from the German language (*kooperative*), can serve as an example to indicate a person's belonging to the older generation. In Soviet times, the adjective *cooperative* derived from it was often used (a *cooperative shop* – a shop based on the principle of pooling the funds of shareholders). With the collapse of the Soviet Union, this term came out of use. This concept was replaced by a *share-based shop*, which was derived from a word *share*.

Therefore, old age is a stage in human life where the edifying function of an individual begins to manifest itself more than any other stage; he or she more than ever begins to support his or her loved ones with advice and guidance. This means that the older generation, unlike young people, is characterized by lexical units that express the meaning of advice, instruction, etc. This makes it possible to speak of age as a sociolinguistic phenomenon.

4 Conclusion

Thus, the ideas of native speakers of a certain language about old age are due to extra-linguistic factors. The Russian mentality is based on such an understanding of old age that a person who has reached old age is characterized by physical weakness and wisdom [9]. It should be noted here that, indeed, depending on the mentality, attitudes towards older people may be different.

In particular, the Uzbek have a deep respect for the older generation. It is evidenced only by the fact that the President of our country, Sh.M. Mirziyoev, starts every trip to the regions of our Republic by talking to local representatives of the older generation, thanks them for their heroism and deeds, emphasizing their special role in the education of a decent younger generation. Decently appreciating their contribution to the prosperity of our homeland, since the first days of independence, the government has paid great attention and care to the older generation in our Republic. It is important to note that respect and reverence for the elderly is embedded in the character of each of our compatriots, being part of their spirituality.

Gerontology is, therefore, one of the modern scientific fields that studies the range of problems associated with old age and ageing. One of the areas of this science that is in contact with linguistics is social gerontology. In the latter, only linguistic issues related to human speech learning have been investigated. Further deepening of gerontology in the study of linguistic issues is expected to pave the way for the emergence of an integrated scientific field, which will possibly be called linguistic gerontology or gerontological linguistics.

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