

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.18454/RULB.2020.22.2.24>**БИНАРНАЯ ОППОЗИЦИЯ «СВОЙ – ЧУЖОЙ» КАК КРИТЕРИЙ ИДЕНТИФИКАЦИИ ЭТНИЧЕСКИ ЧУЖОГО В ФОЛЬКЛОРНОЙ МОДЕЛИ МИРА (НА МАТЕРИАЛЕ СЛАВЯНСКИХ ЯЗЫКОВ)**

Научная статья

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**Аннотация**

Статья посвящена особенностям экспликации дихотомии «свой – чужой» в языке и народной культуре восточных, западных и южных славян. Авторы приходят к выводу, что восприятие иностранца как этнически чужого может рассматриваться в контексте противопоставления «человек – не-человек» как частного случая полярной оппозиции «свой – чужой», которое в наивных представлениях пронизывает все уровни бытия от этиологических легенд до бытовой прагматики. Все славянские языки демонстрируют наиболее универсальные мотивы, характерные для «не-человеческого» образа представителей иной этнической общности. Прежде всего, это верования об их звериной или звероподобной сущности, тесной связи с потусторонним миром, отсутствии речи и нарушении этических норм.

**Ключевые слова:** бинарная оппозиция, своя этническая общность, этнически чужой, фольклорная модель мира, славянские языки, этноним.

**THE "IN-GROUP – OUT-GROUP" BINARY OPPOSITION AS THE CRITERION FOR IDENTIFYING THE OUT-GROUP MEMBERS IN THE FOLK MODEL OF THE WORLD (BASED ON SLAVIC LANGUAGES)**

Research article

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**Abstract**

The paper discusses the peculiarities of explicating the dichotomy "in-group – out-group" in the languages and folklore of the Eastern, Western and Southern Slavs. The authors conclude that the traditional attitudes to foreigners as out-group members can be considered in the context of the opposition "human – non-human" as a special case of the "in-group – out-group" polarity, which permeates all levels of being from etiological legends to everyday routines. All Slavic languages demonstrate the most universal motives that characterize the "non-human" image of an out-group member. First of all, these are beliefs about their bestial or animal-like nature, close connection with the devil, lack of speech, and violation of ethical norms.

**Keywords:** binary opposition, in-group, out-group, folk model of the world, Slavic languages, ethnonym.

**Introduction**

Each human being as a linguistic personality generates his own unique vision of the world shaped by the language he speaks. However, Petrenko & Mitina [3, P. 179] do not exclude the presence of common structures to categorize the surrounding reality. Indeed, the world is structured in terms of opposites. Such oppositions can be associated with space: top – bottom, east – west, time span: day – night, winter – summer, color: white – black, division of society: rich – poor, etc. Moreover, the binary opposition is the base on which we build more sophisticated concepts: good – evil, right – wrong, male – female, and the like. Klages points out that it has become the basic «unit» of our thought, both as individuals and as a culture [12, P. 206]. Foucault writes that dissimilarity has become the combat of one form against another [8, P. 23].

In 1906, an American social scientist William Graham Sumner presented the binary concepts of in-group and out-group. In-group is a special class of membership groups characterized by a potent internal cohesiveness among its members [18, P. 218] for whom people feel concerned and are willing to cooperate [22] with a strong and deep commitment [14] and unquestioned loyalty [11]. In contrast, out-group is a group of individuals that people see as separate and different from them [21] who can be led to stereotyping and prejudice [13] while being perceived as a source of threat [18]; communicating with them may cause uncertainty and anxiety [9].

Previous researchers have explored in-group and out-group identity mainly from the perspectives of social identity theory [15], intergroup contact theory [19], and expectancy-violation theory [6]. However, not many works have examined this issue in terms of linguistic and folklore studies.

This paper is focused on in-group and out-group categorization in the Slavic folk model of the world. We address the folk model of the world since it is a cognitive schema that is intersubjectively shared by a particular ethnic group [7]. It appeared that the binary notion «in-group – out-group member» pervades all levels of the folk picture of the world. It can be found in naïve cosmology, mythology, beliefs, omens, and everyday routine [2]. As a rule, the out-group members are viewed as beasts, sinful creatures, evil forces, and inhabitants of the otherworld.

**Discussion & Results**

The "human – non-human" opposition accounts for the anthropocentric nature of language [20, P 40]. Deeply rooted in the strong belief that human beings are the most important entity in the universe anthropocentric approach is profoundly embedded in the majority of cultures. In traditional culture, anthropocentrism is connected with the concept of ethnocentrism, which

explicitly states that each group of people tends to regard as true the idea it had always occupied the highest point among contemporaneous ethnic groups and nations, as well as among the nations of the historical past. The viewpoint that one's own language, religion, customs, culture, etc. are superior [16, P. 109] resulted in acts of judging another ethnic group and its culture. According to Adorno, ethnocentrism is a combination of a positive attitude toward own ethnic group (the in-group) with a negative attitude toward the other one (the out-group) [17]. Both of these juxtaposing attitudes are reflected and realized on several linguistic levels: semantics, discourse structure, and idiomatic expressions.

In the Slavic folk model of the world, the out-group members are treated as non-humans. The legends tell about foreigners who are characterized by zoomorphic features. The most frequently attributed zoomorphic feature is the tail. In the Western Slavic medieval folklore, it was widely believed that Jews have small tails, horns, and cloven hoofs. According to Serbian and Montenegrin myths, Turks are born tailed. Besides, there is a strong belief that, like animals, out-group members are born blind with their eyes closed and their eyelids fused together, and it takes a certain time for a baby to open his eyes. Thus, Poles gave credence to the blood libel and accused Jews of using Christian blood to open the eyes of their newborns. Western Ukrainians called the Poles *лях—девятиденник* (a nine-day-old *Lyakh*), due to the belief that the Poles were born blind and open their eyes only on the ninth day after birth, while in Western Belarus the similar belief was attributed to Masurians, a Lechitic ethnic group resided in Masovia – *ślepy Mazur*. In the Russian lore, the inhabitants of Vyatka region and Poshekhonye were nicknamed *слепороды* (blind-born). The moniker originated in the 1421 battle of Khlynov fought by Russian troops against Tartar Army. When the latter besieged the town of Khlynov, the troops from Ustyug hastened to help its residents, who mistook them in the dark for attacking Tartars. Many people were killed during the course of the battle [1, P. 20-21].

Zoomorphism of out-group members is also observed on the level of lexis: Rus. *баран* (ram), *верблюд* (camel) – a native of Central Asia, *енот* (raccoon) – Japanese; Ukr. *звір* (beast) – Caucasian; Czech. *pšon(e)k* < *pes* (dog) – Pole, *skopec* (a castrated ram) – German.

In addition, the out-group members were credited with the presence of anomalous signs, indicating their non-human nature or origin. A large scope of ethnic lore serves to demonize foreigners, presenting them as violent monsters of tremendous size and strength, evoking terror. In Russian legends giants called *чудь* (*chud*), *паны* (*pans*), *мамаи* (*matais*) and *мари* (*mari*) inhabited certain parts of Russia before they were colonized and Christianized. A wide array of Slavic names of giants as mythological creatures apparently goes back to the ancient ethnonyms. For instance, the etymology of Anc. Rus. *исполь*, Pol. *stolim*, Kashub. *stolem*, Bulg. *ispolin* is tied to Spali, a name for the Goth defeated tribe inhabiting the Don region in the 2nd century BC [5, P. 141-142]. Rus. dial. *велет*, *волот*, Ukr. *велет*, *велетень* are associated with Wilsen, a Polaba tribal union, dwelling between the Oder and the Elbe in the 6 – 12th centuries. Eastern Slavic dialects contain many other examples: Kursk *дулен* originated in the Dulebs, the name for the tribal unions of Early Slavs, inhabited Western Volhynia and Middle Danube between the 6th and the 10th centuries; in Olonets dialects *поляк* is a person endowed with remarkable strength; in Polesie dialects *варяг* means a healthy and extremely strong man.

The Pannonian Avars known as *обре* in chronicles of Rus in modern West Slavic languages also stand for a giant: Pol. *olbrzym*, Upper Lusatian *hober*, Czech. *obr*, Slovak. *obor*, *obrun*, Sloven. *yber*. Besides, giants are known under a large number of alternative names, depending on the country: Bulg. *елини* (*Hellenes*), *латини* (*Latins*), *жидове*, *жидавци* (*Jews*), North Maced. *елими* (*Hellenes*); Croat. *pasoglavni Turci* (*dog-headed Turks*), *Tartari pasoglavni* (*dog-headed Tartars*).

It is worth noting the given naming pattern can be found in other European and non-European languages: Germ. *Hüne* (giant, hulk) ultimately comes from the self-designation of the Huns, nomadic people who lived in Central Asia, the Caucasus and Eastern Europe between the 4th and 6th centuries; French *ogre* (a hideous man-like creature, who eats ordinary people) is derived from *Hongrois* (*Hungarian*); the Ossetian name for the seven-headed mythical monster *Rujmon* originated in Rome; the Avestan term *dahāka* (*demon*) refers to the Dahae, a confederation of three Iranian tribes that lived in the territory of modern Turkmenistan and dissolved some time before the beginning of the 1st century AD.

Further research on folklore perception of out-groups provides evidence that they have unusual lower limbs. The Northwestern Russian and Urals legends reminisce about the destruction of the one-legged Chudes (*чудь одноногая*) when the Slavs were occupying their territories. Polish Catholics believed that Lutherans had six toes on each foot, while Jews had bow legs with half-bent knees. According to the generally accepted Serbian belief, the Turks had no heels on their feet.

Such unusual body features are associated with a violation of the moral rules in the distant past. Primitive people regarded most ethical rules and their violation as merely human, nonreligious affairs that they were able to cope with without aid from the gods; but so urgent was the need of Christian church to prevent incest, bestiality, etc. that the violations were punished by the God [23].

In Bulgarian legends belonging mostly to the long centuries of Ottoman rule, Turks are offspring of a human and an animal – a woman and a dog, or shepherd and a she-snake. According to Galician legend, gypsies are the descendants of a woman and a devil. Serbian etiology legend points out that an old, paralyzed woman was impregnated with the devil and gave birth to twins, the ancestors of gypsies. Other Serbian sources attribute gypsies' origin to siblings of a one-eyed woman and a blind man. Brother and sister married each other and had twins, who succumbed to each other's lust as well, and so on it continued until forty-one gypsy tribes had appeared. As stated by Hutsul folklore, a woman and a devil gave birth to Vlachs. It is worth mentioning that such etiological legends appeared long before the Early Modern period or even Middle Ages. In the 5th century BC, Herodotus considered Scythians to be born from the marriage of Heracles with echidna, a half-maid and half-serpent.

The similar ideas can be found in idioms and sayings: Rus. *Бог создал Адама, а черт – молдавана; Зырянин рыж от бога, татарин рыж от черта; Первого черемиса леший родил; Финляндия – чертова сторонушка*. Ukr. *Бог створив цапа, а чорт кацапа. Чорт родив цапа, а цап – кацапа*.

Actually, the given legends mirror the traditional folklore awareness of any ethnic group as an individual entity separated from the environment and ethnic neighbors. Moreover, interpreting real or imaginary features of a national character, they much contributed to the formation of certain ethnic stereotypes.

Unlike an animal, a human being is initially characterized by a double-fold nature: firstly, he has a body; secondly, a person is able to speak, contemplate, and cognize intellectually the world around him. However, in the folk model of the world out-group members are often dumb or have another speech disorder, which is explicit both in legends and vocabulary: Ant. Rus. *ньмьць* (*German*) – a person, whose speech is unintelligible and unclear, Rus. dial. *немчик* (*little German*) – a child, who does not speak yet, *латыш* (*Latvian*) – a person, who cannot speak Russian well.

In Russia, ethnonym *немцы* was employed to designate foreigners since ancient times. The Lavrentievsky Chronicle under 1096 reported that *Югра же людие есть языкъ немъ*, i.e. foreign-speaking (dumb) people [4, P. 107]. The word *ньмьчинь* meaning both "German" and "any foreigner" is actively used in Ancient Russian chronicles at least from the 12th century.

The parallel *dumb = foreigner / dumb = German* is viewed in other Slavic languages: Bulg. *нѣмец* (*German*) and *нѣмец* (*dumb*), Serbo-Croat. *нијемац* (*German* and *dumb*), Czech. *netec*, Pol. *niemiec*, Upper and Lower Luzh. *netc*, and *nitc*, respectively. In Arabic, the word *a'ġam* – *dumb, speechless* also signifies a representative of any non-Arabic ethnic group. Later on, it was borrowed by Kurdish, maintaining both meanings: *bjam* – dumb and non-Kurd.

As for the legends, the Poles say that it's hard to understand the gypsy's speech since the old gypsy hurt her tongue by a nail, which the Roman soldiers wanted to stick into the crucified Christ's heart. On the report of the Belarusian narrative of the beginning of the world, when fighting with the first Mazur, the devil happened to knock out his incisors that led to the lisping of the entire nation. As specified by the Bulgarian tale, long ago a wise and just king expelled all the robbers and thieves from the country. The exiles settled down south of the Danube, soon their hair and beards were wildly overgrown and they forgot how to speak Bulgarian. By the way, according to naïve etymology, the name *Vlachs* is derived from "shaggy, hairy". A few centuries later, another Bulgarian king decided to forgive them, baptize, and make look like human beings. However, Vlachs have not learned to speak Bulgarian properly yet and still use their "wild" dialect.

Dissimilarity between human (in-group) and non-human (out-group) language and speech is also seen in

a) idioms: Rus. *говорить русским языком* – in clear, straightforward language, but *китайская грамота* – smth incomprehensible, unknown or weird; Ukr. *Це для мене китайська грамота*; Bulg. *Все едно ми говориш на патагонски* (It's like you're talking in Patagonian); Croat. *To su za mene španska sela*; Czech. *To je pro mě španělská vesnice*. Maced. *За мене тоа е шпанско село*; Slov. *To je pre mňa španielska dedina* (This is a Spanish village to me); Pol. *tureckie kazanie* (Turkish tales);

b) adages: Rus. *Как не закаивайся литвин, а дзекнет. Литвин нацокает, что и не разберешь его. Только мертвый литвин не дзекнет. Разве лихо возьмет литвина, чтоб он не дзекнул*. Bel. *Як наша мова: дзе да ідзе, ідзі ды хадзі, а як маскоўская мова: бярэ ды дзярэ, ды чорт іх разбярэ, хто каго дзярэ*.

Again, it reflects the traditional idea that only in-group's mother tongue is a human language in contrast to out-groups' languages that are considered barbaric or animal-like. One's own language is always perceived as the most natural way of communication, while the languages of others are seen with suspicion, humiliation, or contempt. As claimed by Håkansson & Westander [10, P. 48], this practice highlights the fact that language is an in-group phenomenon, based on implicit agreements between the group members since they are the ones that form and maintain the language. Therefore, language works as the glue that holds a group together and keeps outsiders out.

### Conclusion

The evidence from this study points towards the idea that the features attributed to the out-group members in all Slavic languages have a mythological basis. The naïve opinion that out-group members are extremely hostile and dangerous creatures goes back to archaic beliefs that all individuals who do not belong to the in-group much resemble animals, but not humans. In this regard, people believe foreigners to have zoomorphic features – tails, horns, hoofs, hairy skin, absence of speech, etc. Furthermore, the folk model of the world doesn't manifest any dissimilarity between out-groups. All other nations are generalized as inferior, lower in status, non-human, and second-rate regardless of their location, social and economic position, education level, religion, and political preferences.

### Конфликт интересов

Не указан.

### Conflict of Interest

None declared.

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