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# The Linguistic Image of *Man* in the Hungarian and Romanian Languages

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**Abstract.** By analyzing the key words we reconstruct the conceptions created by the two speech communities in their languages in order to understand their interpretation of reality. The analysis of the collocations and expressions identifies common basic principles reflecting the relationship between language and thought. The analysis is based on the theory of linguistic relativity and uses methods recommended by Bańczerovski Janusz, Lera Boroditsky and Anna Wierzbicka in order to investigate connections between language and culture, language and thought. By adapting the recommended evaluation methods an evaluation model was created, able to reconstruct the Hungarian and Romanian linguistic image of *man*.

**Keywords:** language, culture, linguistic image, Hungarian, Romanian

The image of the *Other*—whether reflecting another culture or gender—is described through concrete linguistic analysis. Through the semantic analysis of certain key words those concepts were reconstructed which are created by the Hungarian and Romanian speech communities. The stereotypical vernacular speech products about the knowledge of the self and the peer were compared through current speech acts.

While researching the linguistic image of the world concept, I could not elude the arguments regarding linguistic relativism, however, in the present work I shall not focus on the presentation of this theory. The present study is based on Wierzbicka's cultural script model. I consider it the most appropriate method in the interpretation of discourse conventions. Wierzbicka concludes that, if we want to perceive societies on the basis of their individuality, we can achieve this through the analysis of those words which can become active in the knowledge of the whole community, while being also universal. Therefore, we can avoid stereotypizations, the qualification of different cultures. These words are specifically cultural, and they reflect not only the existential characteristics of that community but also their ways of thinking (Wierzbicka 1997: 5).

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The culture-specific words represent those key indicators whose semantic range embodies the knowledge about the world of a given community. Specific, well-defined criteria were used in order to decide if a given lexeme sets up as a keyword within the context of a given culture by using the following steps: (1) we have to decide if the given lexeme belongs to the community's active vocabulary, (2) we also have to investigate if that word reoccurs in certain semantic domains, for instance, in the emotional or moral sentencing area, (3) furthermore, we have to highlight that the given lexeme also makes up the phraseological module, that it is often used in proverbs and sayings, idioms, vernacular texts or book titles, etc.

The analysis of the connection between language and way of thinking is strongly supported by Wierzbicka's applicable and valid investigation through her model based on linguistic semantics and conceptual universal grammatical categories. Furthermore, she emphasises the use of linguistic analysis focused on the relevance of words, which interprets the lexeme not as an isolated lexical unit, but as a fundamental element pointing to the cognition of daily cultural knowledge and practice.

## 1. The linguistic image of the world

The connections between language and one's way of thinking, language and the image of the world involves not only the theory of Sapir–Whorf but it also drives us towards the ideas regarding the linguistic image of the world. Nowadays this expression represents a concept related to the area of cognitive linguistics; however, it was born together with the concept of linguistic relativity introduced by Herder, then by Humboldt, who had already brought up the topic of the linguistic image of the world. Moreover, Humboldt applies another concept, "sprachliche Weltanschauung" 'linguistic world view' (Hegedűs 2000: 131), which subsequently turns into the linguistic image of the world. As linguists' attention turned towards the theory of relativity, the concept of linguistic image of the world becomes more and more accurate. Polish linguists were primarily focusing on this topic. Its use in Hungarian language is mainly related to the contribution of Bańczerowski Janusz, however, beginning with the early 1990s, there were similar researches carried out in Cluj, which analysed the linguistic image of the world, mainly by Sándor Szilágyi N. and his students who approached the *linguistic image of the world* model (Szilágyi 1996). This research team carried out semantic analyses, which even preceded Bańczerowski's research methodology.

Pacsai (2010: 205) considers the linguistic image of the world as the sum of the linguistic units setting up the metaphorical image, thus reflecting Lakoff and Johnson's theory of conceptual metaphors. It emphasises the fact that our everyday way of thinking is influenced by a metaphorical network, and the long-

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term memory, through a metaphorical and metonymical extension, is organised on the basis of operative prototypes, conceptual surveys, or more specifically, conceptual metaphors (Schnell 2006: 112-113).

In the literature, the linguistic image of the world refers to the daily experience and naïve knowledge represented by the language of the speech community. It is always connected to a particular speech community where the objective reality juxtaposes with the so-called mental reality, thus we obtain a certain living mental picture of the external world (Hegedűs 2000: 132-136). The linguistic image of the world is such an expressive background which determines the creation of words, the formation of expressions (Nyomárkay 2010: 189).

From my viewpoint, besides those mentioned above, the linguistic image of the world is also the linguistic mark of a mutual past based on a certain type of experience as the collective memory preserves that mutual set of information, which also preserves the community's past experiences and lifestyle while it sets (or even rejects) a model of behaviour for the present.

## 2. Data acquisition standpoints

The survey of monolingual and bilingual dictionaries was considered as the most adequate method[1] while analysing the linguistic structures present in standard language. Therefore, I used two parallel corpora: one in Hungarian and one in Romanian, using Hungarian and Romanian explanatory concise dictionaries, Hungarian-Romanian dictionaries, Hungarian-Romanian dictionaries of phrases, and collections of Hungarian and Romanian sayings, the Hungarian National Text Collection, and I also included on-line texts as sources of analysis. A number of questionnaires (however, not representative) were carried out.

I used the lexemes *férfi* ('man' in Hungarian) and *bărbat* ('man' in Romanian) as key words. They often appear both in the Hungarian and Romanian corpora: they are frequent in many lexical combinations, in various collocations, they represent the key words in many sayings, and they are also found in other folk creations.

## 3. About the questionnaire data

Although the questionnaire corpus is not representative, I still considered it necessary to provide the following data: the same questions were used both in

1 When I refer to different Hungarian monolingual dictionaries, I apply the abbreviations listed on the Hungarian language website (*http://www.c3.hu/~magyarnyelv/*), and in the case of the Romanian monolingual dictionaries I use the abbreviation provided in the preface of the dictionary (s. Sources).

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the Hungarian and Romanian questionnaires. There were 44 Hungarian and 49 Romanian participants, between 14-60 year old, both in the countryside and in towns. From the perspective of their denomination, the informants belong to the Reformed, Roman Catholic and Orthodox Church, while others considered themselves Christians, Neo-Protestants.[2]

The distribution of the Hungarian participants was the following: there were 21 women and 23 men who filled in the questionnaires; 16 Reformed, 19 Roman Catholics, 6 persons defined themselves as "Christians" and 3 declared no religion. Referring to their educational level, 18 students (pupils and students) took part in the survey, 11 persons were university graduates and 15 post-graduates. 9 persons were from the countryside and 35 lived in towns. According to their age-range, between 14–19 years old there were 16 persons, 20–25 years old: 4 persons, 26–30 years old: 12 persons, 31–35 years old: 6 persons, 36–40 years old: only 1 person and between 41–60 years old: 5 persons.

Considering the total of 49 Romanian participants, there were 34 women and 15 men. Among them 46 Orthodox, 2 participants defined themselves as Christians and 1 person did not reply to this question. Referring to their educational level, 19 students (pupils and students), 13 university graduates and 17 high-school graduates answered the questions. Urban participants represented the majority: there were 3 persons from villages and 46 from towns. Regarding their age-range, between 14–19 years old there were 19 persons, 20–25 years old: 7 persons, 26–30 years old: 3 persons, 31–35 years old: 8 persons, 36–40 years old: 1 person, 41–60 years old: 11 persons participated in the survey.

44 persons filled in the questionnaire referring to one of the Hungarian lexemes, (*férfi* 'man'). Regarding the first question, *What does a man mean to you*?, the majority replied *strength/protection* (21 persons), *courage* (18 persons). When inquiring about the characteristics of Hungarian men, we got the following replies: *powerful* (21 persons), *drunkard* (19 persons), *stubborn* (11 persons). To the question *What is an ideal man like*?, the majority replied: *powerful/strong, muscled/neat* (24 persons), *trustworthy* (10 persons), *family-centric/faithful* (9).

There were only a few who replied the last question (*Which is the poem, song, saying or idiom related to man that comes into your mind?*). Those who replied cited Petőfi's quotation: *If you are a man, be a man* (7 persons), or *husband/man, the master of the house* (8 persons).

According to the results, the *férfi* 'man' is that person who is primarily powerful and protective, yet his negative side can be noticed, especially because of his drunkenness and stubbornness. I find it relevant that elements such as devotion and the importance of family are related to the ideal man yet in several questionnaires (especially in the case of students and women, 12 persons in all)

2 The religious affiliation is very important because it influences the way of seeing the world and it defines the values in which the individual was born.

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this was expressed in a highly personal way (for instance, *it would be good if he did not womanise with others; he loves his family thus he remains with us; he is not drunk when he returns home*).

Analysing the linguistic image of the Romanian *bărbat* 'man' we analysed 49 questionnaires. To the question: *What does a man mean to you*?, the majority replied: *power/protection* (28 persons), *responsibility* (15 persons), *material stability* (14 persons). When inquiring them about the characteristics of a Romanian man the following replies were given: *protecting* (20 persons), *powerful* (19 persons), *and aggressive* (17 persons). When asking, *What is the ideal man like?, the majority* replied: *powerful* (17 persons), *rich/wealthy/self-supporting* (16 persons), *mature/responsible* (7). The few who answered the last question (*Which is the poem, song, saying or idiom related to man that comes into your mind?*), mainly used a saying: *Bărbatul să fie puțintel mai frumos decât dracul* (*'A Man should be just a little bit nicer than the devil',* 9 persons).

According to the results, the *bărbat* 'man' is such a person who is first of all strong, provides protection and material stability for women, yet we also notice his negative side, especially through the agency of aggressiveness. I find it relevant that the Romanian ideal man is related to the idea of wealth and compared to this the demands regarding material stability mean nothing but expectation.

## 4. The reconstructive pattern of the linguistic image of the world

"Language (...) is a particular cultural archive comprising the material and spiritual experience, axiological structure, ideology and behaviour patterns of a given community, the emotional connection to the world, thus the model of the world (Bańczerowski 2008: 165). This world model is differently reflected by languages, and by analysing the linguistic units, conceptualisations may be reconstructed as well (idem, 173), finally obtaining the language-specific meaning of the concepts. In order to reach this point we need to expose the subjective character of the linguistic statement, the profile and conventionality of cognitive processes. Bańczerowski refers to these conceptual metaphors as definable linguistic categories, which express the everyday knowledge model while also reflecting the connections among certain domains. The definition of domains, the concepts' inclusion in different domains, and the analysis of their connections with other domains are going to reveal the model of analysis, which represents the linguistic image of the culturally related world.

This model of analysis relies on three key ideas: first the *cognitive domain*—which sets up as some experience, as a simple or complex conception. The

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linguistic expressions can develop one or more cognitive domains at the same time. The second one is the concept *of profile*, which refers to the profilisation process, "it suggests the concentration of one's attention on a concrete element within the context of a given cognitive basis so that we could differentiate and emphasise this element in a special way" (idem, 181). Finally, the *basis* represents a conglomeration which concentrates and comprises different domains.

The main meaning of the *man* lexeme, given by the definitions in dictionaries, involves two characteristics: 1. being a grown-up and 2. being provided with those features which define an adult masculine individual. In reality, the two semantic elements overlap and set up such an authorised system of expectations which can be related only to those grown-ups who are endowed with certain physical and spiritual qualities. On this basis, the signification of man emphasises especially the conceptual *value*, and underlines the *power profile*.

According to my corpus, power refers to physical manifestations only in few facts and figures: a man is powerful, tall, his back/shoulder is large, he is manly, well-built, hairy, unshaven, sporty, good-looking, large-shouldered; handsome; deep voiced, male voiced. A man's appearance can be related to the Hungarian verb *become manly* as well; moreover, the importance of physical condition can be emphasised by some compound words: *virile power, manly hand, manly arm, manly work*, or the *unmanly* adjective, suggesting manly features and attitude.

From an aesthetic point of view, a man's face and body do not really have to express his beauty but his strength. On the basis of this corpus, our question—whether a man is good-looking or not—is supported by the following saying: *A man has to be just a little bit nicer than the devil.*

Based on his virtues, his strength, his inner *positive* characteristics, a man is: brave, honest, "Powerful, brave, secure" (Petőfi), persevering, protective, resolute, sober-minded, purposeful, clever, logical, intelligent, taciturn, meditative, diligent, goes about his own business, guides, organises, creates, expresses respect, justice and wisdom. All these are certified by the following lexical combinations and structures: *manly reputation, a man's judgement, a man's point of view, a man's head, leading man, man's struggle, man's part; regardful man, loyal man, rebellious man, businessman, cool man, successful man; man, boy; a man indeed, statesman.*

The profile also suggests *negative* elements being often associated with the idea of aggressiveness, but also with the absence of self-control or silliness. The collected material comprises relevant expressions and lexical combinations such as: *assassin, the outstanding man, weak, involuntary, irresolute and immature man, undisciplined, unrighteous, unstable, infuriated man, hostile man, arrogant and insensible man, man's fidelity.* This image is primarily supported by virtual portals and the data reflected in the questionnaires.

The corpus comprises only a few proverbs related to man's life: *A háznál egy oszlopot tart a férfi, de az asszony kettőt* ('The man is the head but the woman

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is the neck'). *Szalma férfi is arany asszonyt érdemel* ('Weak men also deserve good women'). The first text decreases the value of man if related to a woman, a family, or the household; it rather emphasises the woman's central interest in the family. The asymmetrical aspect of the man-woman relationship is reflected by our common saying too: *A férfiak háziállattá tették a nőt, s felpanaszolják neki a takarmányt* ('Men have turned women into domestic animals, then complaining to them about their fodder', Ferenc Móra).

*Szalmaférfi is arany asszonyt érdemel* ('Weak men also deserve good women') has already marked a relevant traditional lifestyle focused on men—it highlights man's superiority, as pointed by religious texts where, according to the biblical commands of genders, the man is the leader of a woman, while women represent the support of men.

Given the provided data, a man's Hungarian linguistic image is also expressed in the following domain, the *domain of time*, where this lexeme reflects the *age profile*. It appears in the expressions and lexical combinations emphasising the disparity of age or expectations and tasks related to age: *come of age, manhood, man line, mature man* (it can be the synonym of grown-up but also of determination), *man of full age*.

Assuming from a smaller context of typical male activities there were lexical combinations referring to the *sportsman's profile*: *man exclusive*, *sportsman* (a person who usually practises sports), *sporting* (open collared shirt), *sports car* (used especially by men), *athlete man*, *gentleman readers of sport magazines and newspapers, strong-willed man*. This image is displayed on websites and advertising texts.

The next aspect regarding a man's lifestyle is about differentiating it from women's lifestyle. These lexical combinations indicate things and activities men are interested in, while also suggesting that they are not indicated to women. We find these structures in the context of *dressing*: *men's footwear, men's fashion, men's commodities, men's socks, men's shirt, hat, men's trousers, male ward/men's department, suit of clothes, men's clothier, men's tailor, men's clothes;* or the group denoting words serving the *gender definitions* in the context of a community: *men's circle, male/masculine, mankind, society of men, brother*, *man's name*.

In Hungarian a man's image summons two cognitive bases (value, time), and they convey not only the patterns of traditional culture but also the views of present-day society.

In the Romanian corpus concerning the lexical determination of *bărbat* 'man' we also find two main explanations: 1. adult/grown-up and 2. husband, yet we sense a certain main characteristic expressing courage, bravery, diligence. In Romanian people often use the *bărbat* lexeme to suggest husband (*bărbatul meu* 'my husband'), but this account can also be found in the explanatory dictionary (DEX) expressing its second interpretation.

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According to the Romanian corpus, a *bărbat* 'man' is *mature, responsible, helpful, strong, brave, bold, independent; contest and success oriented, aggressive; rich/wealthy, self-supportive, he has his own car/house, polite, mindful; competent man, humorous, provides the woman with protection and safety; drinks only rarely and is never drunk, he is not aggressive, he is slightly jealous; he gives a hand in housework, he is affectionate, faithful, and knows how to pamper women.*

There are some derivatives and certain structures which reappear, such as: *manly, male, manhood*; *a man's man, good man, brave man, intelligent man, rich man, good-looking man*; *be a man!; man type, statesman, man's business, man's word, man's magazine, men's fashion/clothes/footwear/gifts; manly dispute, he endures it in a virile way, he lost/won/acted manly, male struggles.*

Taking the already given examples into account, *bărbat* is localised in the *domain of values* and points to the *power profile*. The physical condition is not underlined in the Romanian corpus; the texts rather suggest the domain of inner strength by means of bravery, determination, intelligence, knowledge, persistence.

We also notice another attribute, a different aspect regarding the *possession of material goods*: in the Romanian corpus man has to manage his house, his car, his workplace/career, he needs enough money to meet social expectations; therefore, the more capable a man is in acquiring these goods, the higher his measures and value. In other words, a man is going to become the head of a family when he can provide safety, protection, material independence, viability.

In older texts a man's aesthetical appearance is less emphasised: two proverbs were collected referring to this: *Bărbatul să fie puțintel mai frumos decât dracul* ('A man has to be just a little bit nicer than the devil'). *Fie un băț decojat, tot se numeşte bărbat* ('No matter if he looks like a stripped stick, he is still a man'). In online texts there are few expressions designating man's beauty: *handsome man, well-favoured man.* However, texts of commercials and adverts indirectly refer to man's well-groomed appearance, to the ideal Romanian man's appearance: he takes care of himself (he uses face creams, perfumery and perfect razors, he often takes a shower).

The *bărbat* concept also summons the *knowledge profile* in the domain of values. This is supported not only by a number of expressions such as *intelligent man, statesman,* but also by some of the Romanian proverbs and literary texts: *The erudite man erects fortresses, the erudite woman demolishes them* or "*Each man needs a mistress. His wife thinks he is at his mistress, his mistress thinks he is with his wife and this way he can read peacefully in the library*"—as stated by Grigore Moisil in one of his famous aphorisms.

Religious texts define man as the possessor of knowledge: the right to speak and teach is related to men, while women have to keep quiet. However, traditionally, the literary and political activities were regarded as a man's task and postulated the issue of knowledge, suitability and creativity.

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At the same time, the vernacular texts also sketch the absence of knowledge: *Ce ştie tot satul, nu ştie bărbatul* ('What a man does not know is shared by the whole village'). *Bărbatul ține cheia uşii, dar fereastra e deschisă* ('The man has the key of the house yet the window is open'). All these outline the cheated, deceived man.

Considering the Romanian dictionaries and questionnaires, we localise man in the *family domain*—definitions point to *man's profile*. This profile refers to that standard and traditional (vernacular and religious) context where *bărbat* 'man' is provided with more references to his family or wife. *Man is the head of the household*; *the man is the woman's head, it is only him who can support and manage a family, he has been created to master all the other beings*—in this context man guides, leads, and masters. In parallel with this, in sayings, as questionnaires attest it, we have the image according to which a man is not very successful without his partner, a woman/ a wife: *dependent on his woman's existence and availability, he has a complementary character*; *Bărbatul e zidul din afara casei iar femeia e peretele dinăuntru* ('The man is the outer wall while the woman is the inner wall').

The *man* concept is also connected to the *unfaithful lover—everlasting love* motive, which refers to man's polygamy: *men are born polygamous by nature*—this was obvious in two questionnaires; *Men hunt for women and one day they will fall prey to them. Un bărbat îndrăgostit este mai dibaci decât o mie de avocați* ('A man in love is much wiser than a thousand lawyers')—from the Romanian sayings; "*Sunt bărbați care se cred copaci: fiecare an înseamnă alt inel*" ('There are men who believe they are trees: each ring suggests another year') one of Valeriu Butulescu's well-known common sayings.

In Romanian the typical man generally emphasises positive associations—in the domain of values the *power* profile is achieved through his capacity to acquire different material goods; the knowledge profile refers, on the one hand, to his intellectual knowledge, on the other hand, to its practical aspect, yet here we also observe the negative aspect where, because of man's lack of knowledge, he becomes ridiculous or vulnerable.

In the family domain it is the *husband* profile which becomes more relevant—as a result, it highlights the positive aspects: protection, guidance, support. But we also get the partner/fellow image, which becomes complete thanks to a woman.

The image reflecting the loving-lover man expresses a twofold character: on the one hand, it reflects a stereotypical social role as an expectation of the implicit community conventions; on the other hand, funny and popular texts prove that unfaithful husbands may finally come off badly.

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## Summative evaluation

The linguistic image of man and husband is only partially questionable. As axiological categories are provided with many mutual features—both concepts are primarily settled in the cognitive domain of value, but they indicate different profiles, design different cultural roles, express different expectations from the perspective of their community—however, the multi-levelled deviation between the two concepts' linguistic image is obvious.

In the Hungarian linguistic corpus the man's age profile (*manhood, become manly, mature man*) is related to the time domain, while in the Romanian corpus this image is not present at all, still in the Romanian texts we find the family and husband profile (*Man is the head of his family*), which denotes more aspects. Furthermore, in Hungarian the man's concept is strongly associated with a sporty image (*athletic man*), denoting man and non-man categories (*male circle, man, manhood, society of men, brother; man's name; men's room*).

In Hungarian verbs can be derived from the noun *férfi* '*man*'—*férfiasodik* 'become manly' which means he has reached maturity, for instance, he has come up to be a man. However, the verb derived from the noun woman, *nőiesedik* 'become womanly', does not point to age, it rather refers to her external features, physical characteristics. As an adjective, the lexical signification of *férfias* 'manly' suggests bodily attributes, however, in speech it is rather associated with a certain (positive) attitude (a qualifying word in certain contexts), while the *womanly* adjective emphasises the corporal attributes as well.

In Romanian the verb *a îmbărbăta* 'to hearten' is derived from the noun *bărbat* 'man', which means 'to encourage.' In this context bravery reflects a certain positive characteristic which is emphasised by the image created around the noun *bărbat*. However, in Romanian no verb can be formed from the noun *femeie* 'woman' (the explanation can be approached only in a speculative way: on the one hand, it traces us back to the idea that in Romanian *bărbat* 'man' is present as a qualifying word, provided especially with positive meanings; on the other hand, conceptually, women's state of being appears less valuable (compared to that of men).

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