

### **Vitae**

Yuliia Hryshko is Master of Philology, PhD student of Ukrainian Language Department at Poltava V. G. Korolenko National Pedagogical University, speciality – Philology (Linguistics). Her area of research interests includes: text linguistics, phonetics, stylistics, phonetic stylistics, phonetic semantics, psycholinguistics, pedagogics, Ukrainian folk-lore, Old Slavonic mythology.

**Correspondence:** yuliia\_hryshko@ukr.net.

Надійшла до редакції 27 січня 2021 року  
Рекомендована до друку 10 лютого 2021 року

**Oksana Kozachyshyna**

ORCID: orcid.org/0000-0002-7643-453X

**Antonina Mosiichuk**

ORCID: orcid.org/0000-0003-4806-9333

DOI 10.31558/1815-3070.2021.41.17

УДК: 811.111`373`42

## **METAPHORICAL REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN'S IMAGES IN THE CONTEMPORARY AMERICAN TV-SERIES "DESPERATE HOUSEWIVES"**

*У статті аналізується роль концептуальних метафор як концептуального підґрунтя жіночих образів у сучасному американському телесеріалі. Виявлені групи концептуальних метафор дозволили схарактеризувати образний компонент чотирьох жіночих образів аналізованого телесеріалу та встановити особливості концептуалізації образу жінки, який у сучасному американському світобаченні набуває разом з традиційними нових, нетипових для нього характеристик.*

**Ключові слова:** образ жінки, метафорична репрезентація, концептуальна метафора, когнітивна поетика, сучасний телесеріал

### **1. Introduction**

From the standpoint of cognitive poetics (Белехова 2004; Tsur 2017), an innovative branch of philological research focusing on the mechanisms of the reader's perception and conceptualization of language structures, literary images are viewed as complex, dynamic entities that are inseparable from their figurative nature. As cognitive poetics attempts to explain the cognitive processes underlying the processing and interpretation of literary forms by the reader (Tsur 2017), the investigation of women's images from this perspective aims to reveal the conceptual structures they are grounded in.

**The practical implications** of the research lie in its offering an integrative methodology for analyzing the linguo-cognitive mechanisms of creating literary and artistic images on the whole.

**This article aims** to analyze the figurative component of women's images by addressing their metaphorical representations in the contemporary American TV-series. The aim of the study was achieved following several steps: 1. modelling the woman's image from the cognitive poetic perspective; 2. explicating the structure of the image as a unity of verbal and conceptual facets; 3. developing the cognitive poetic methodology for the analysis of women's images in the contemporary TV-series; 4. revealing groups of conceptual metaphors underlying the four women's images in the American TV-series "Desperate Housewives".

**The object of the study** is metaphorical representations of women's images in the contemporary American TV-series.

**The subject of the research** is linguo-cognitive features of conceptual metaphorical representations of women's images in the American TV-series "Desperate Housewives".

**The novelty of the research** is due to its cognitive poetic perspective that allows analyzing the woman's image as a dynamic linguo-cognitive construct. The results of the study testify to the specifics of conceptualizing women's images in modern American society and contribute to a better understanding of the processes of conceptualization and embodiment of their results in language.

## 2. Methodology

The study employs integrative methodology encompassing such methods of cognitive poetics and cognitive linguistics as conceptual analysis as well as the method of vocabulary definitions and contextual interpretative analysis. While the former aims at revealing the conceptual metaphors linguistically represented in the excerpts of the TV-series, the latter two allow interpreting the meanings of the conceptual metaphorical formations in the context of the analyzed episodes. In this regard, G. Lakoff and M. Johnson's Conceptual Metaphor Theory (Lakoff 1993; Lakoff, Johnson 2003) is employed in the study as an effective methodological tool for researching the figurative component of women's images.

The study was conducted on conceptual metaphors revealed in the contemporary American TV-series "Desperate Housewives" (Season 1, 23 episodes). The language material was randomly selected from the speech of the four main women-characters embodying different women's images in the TV-series: Lynnet Scavo, Gabriell Solis, Susan Mayer, and Bree Van De Kamp; besides, the language sample was also complemented by the narration of Mary Alice Young, who shares the secrets of the neighborhood of Wisteria Lane where the housewives live (DH 1). At the first stage of the analysis, the collected utterances were analyzed for the vocabulary definitions of the lexical units (words, word-combinations, and idioms) constituting them. At the second stage of the research, corresponding conceptual metaphors were revealed and interpreted in the context of the episodes under analysis. As a result, a sample of 88 conceptual metaphors was excerpted from the first season of the TV-series. At the third stage of the research, based on the prevalence of certain conceptual metaphors in the speech of the main characters, four different women's images were modelled, which revealed specifics of a modern American woman's image metaphoric conceptualization in the contemporary American worldview.

## 3. Results and Discussion

In the context of the study, a woman's image is modelled as a linguo-cognitive formation incorporating the verbal and conceptual facets (Белехова 2004: 146-147). The conceptual facet is represented by the concept WOMAN which is constructed by the notional (non-metaphorical) and figurative (metaphorical) components (Воркачев 2004: 48). The notional component of the concept WOMAN is constituted by the corresponding conceptual features *adult*, *female*, *human being* verbalized in the meaning of the lexical unit *woman* (CFOD). Since concepts are mainly structured metaphorically (Masako 17), it is expedient to address the metaphorical component of the concept WOMAN. In this study, we stem from the Conceptual Metaphor Theory of G. Lakoff and M. Johnson, which stresses the omnipresence of conceptual metaphors in the human conceptual system (Lakoff, Johnson 2003: 6) that underlie much of human daily thinking and activities.

Based on the developed methodology, the woman's image was researched in terms of the four basic aspects of the modern American woman's self-realization in society – marriage/family/love relationships, motherhood, job/career, and housekeeping. The distinguished aspects are associated with the corresponding concepts – WOMAN-PARTNER, WOMAN-MOTHER, WOMAN-PROFESSIONAL, and WOMAN-HOUSEKEEPER (Машталіп 2020: 38), which constitute the target domain of the conceptual metaphors under analysis and are interpreted in terms of the structures of common sensor-motor experience in the source domain, such as OBJECT, PATH, CYCLE, etc., which are usually more concrete and understandable (Dirven, Verspoor 1994: 34; Mosiichuk 2018: 115; Taylor 1995: 132-133). Hence, based on the corresponding concepts contained in the target domain, the conceptual metaphors were subdivided into four groups:

**WOMAN-PARTNER conceptual metaphors** constitute the most significant group (44% of the analyzed sample) represented by five subgroups of metaphors. Based on G. Lakoff's and

M. Johnson's classification (Lakoff, Johnson 2003: 25), they can be termed ontological as all of them offer "ways of viewing events, activities, emotions, ideas, etc., as entities and substances" (ibid).

1. The first subgroup of conceptual metaphors is constituted by the concept of **PHYSICAL OBJECT** and can be traced in the **MARRIAGE IS AN OBJECT** metaphor: *Our marriage is rock solid* (DH 20: 26.24-26.25); *I'm holding my marriage together by my fingernails* (DH 15: 12.12-12.26). The examples under analysis show that family life is conceptualized in terms of a physical object with specific properties. Hence, marriage can be *rock solid* indicating that partners are feeling safe in their relationship. Conversely, it can be on the verge of divorce, with partners living in an unstable relationship for a long period, as the phrase *to hold marriage by one's fingernails* indicates, which is associated with the idiom *to hang on by fingernails* meaning someone who "is managing to survive in a difficult situation or to stay in the position they want to, but they are always in danger of failing" (CFOD).

2. **LOVE RELATIONSHIP IS A PATH** is another ontological metaphor that points to marriage being conceptualized in terms of the **LINEAR PATH** schema: *If you keep talking, You're going to work your way into my heart. And I just don't want you anywhere near my heart ever* (DH 15: 42.17-42.24). The analyzed conceptual metaphor is verbalized through the idiom *to work one's way* with the meaning "to move oneself into or out of a particular position slowly or with difficulty" (MW) that testifies to one's slow progress in a relationship.

3. The third subgroup is represented by the conceptual metaphor **MARRIAGE IS MACHINERY/VEHICLE** that can be illustrated with the following example: *A high powered career, a handsome husband, an extravagant house. So, this is (the husband is imprisoned, lack of income) just a blip in the radar for me* (DH 14: 32.19-33.04). The lexical unit *radar* ("the equipment used in discovering the position or speed of objects such as aircraft or ships when they cannot be seen, by using radio signals" (CFOD)) in the context of the analyzed example allows revealing the conceptual metaphor **MARRIAGE IS A VEHICLE** (aeroplane or ship) that is guided by the radar. In terms of this metaphor, family problems encountered by the couple (imprisonment of the husband and low income) are conceptualized as an error of the radar of the family vehicle that has been flying/sailing successfully so far. One more illustrative example representing the conceptual metaphor **MARRIAGE IS MACHINERY** is found in the following episode: *If another sacrifice has to be made, I think it's your turn on the merry-go-round* (DH 5: 37.13-37.25). The lexical unit *merry-go-round* – "a revolving machine with model horses or cars on which people ride for amusement" (CFOD) – refers to the corresponding concept whose conceptual features *turning round, iteration, similarity* are associated with family life routine and describe it as a "continuous cycle of activities or events, especially when regarded as pointless" (CFOD). The conceptual analysis, thus, allows distinguishing one more ontological metaphor **FAMILY LIFE IS A CYCLE** pointing to a cyclic activity devoid of any meaning.

4. **MARRIAGE IS AN ACTIVITY** conceptual metaphor is specified in a set of structural conceptual metaphors that organize the experience delineated by ontological metaphors (Kovesces 2002: 39). Here belong such conceptual metaphors as **MARRIAGE IS SPORT**: *Tom and I are a team* (DH 20: 26.22-26.24); *It was everything Susan could do to keep a smile on her face. Round two was under way, and she was already taking a beating* (DH 2: 43.31-43.40), which testify to a couple's common goals and support similar to those of sportspersons on a team. Other metaphors in this subgroup include **LOVE RELATIONSHIP IS COMPETITION**: *And just like that, the race for Mike Delfino had begun. For a moment, Susan wondered if her rivalry with Edie would remain friendly* (DH 2: 19.37-19.44). The source domain of the metaphor is constituted by the concept **COMPETITION** pointing to the fact that a love relationship is a fight where people are competing for partners. **FAMILY LIFE IS A GAME**: *Juanita might have been the gambler of the family. But Gabrielle was the one who knew the rules how to bluff* (DH 6: 32.21-32.47). The lexical unit *to bluff* and the phrase *to know the rules* allow interpreting family life as a game that is played similar to poker; hence, to succeed in this game one has to know the rules and be ready to bluff if necessary. Associated with these metaphors is one more ontological metaphor **FAMILY RELATIONSHIP IS**

**WAR:** *The war for control of Carlos began the night he proposed, and Gabrielle had been losing ground to Juanita ever since.* (DH 6: 0.40-1.26) where *war* is interpreted as “any situation in which there is a strong competition between opposing sides or a great fight against something harmful” (CFOD). The conceptual features *opposing sides*, *fight*, *harmful* associated with the concept WAR point to one more aspect of a modern American woman – woman-warrior who is ready to fight for her happiness.

5. The fifth subgroup of conceptual metaphors in this category is represented by the ontological metaphor **MARRIAGE IS SUBSTANCE** that is specified in the **MARRIAGE IS A SEA** metaphor: *Had I looked closer, I'd have seen that Gabrielle was a drowning woman desperately in search of a life raft. Luckily for her, she found one. Of course, Gabrielle only saw her young gardener as a way to infuse her life with a little excitement* (DH 2: 1.35-2.04). In the analyzed example, infidelity of the wife is interpreted in terms of the concept RESCUE allowing to detect a conceptual metaphor FAMILY LIFE IS A SEA where one can successfully float or, on the contrary, drown in a sea of problems, with infidelity in this case seen as a life raft, which can save the marriage.

#### **WOMAN-MOTHER conceptual metaphors** (20% of the sample)

In the context of the TV-series, the conceptual feature *motherhood* was revealed as part of a set of structural conceptual metaphors. Notably, such metaphors as **PARENTING IS GARDENING** (*Men by nature are drawn to young women with whom they can plant seed in future* (DH 11: 28.09-28.17)) prove that the contemporary American society preserves the traditional roles of parents as gardeners whose calling is to nurture children. However, the other metaphors were revealed as dominating in the TV-series. Here belongs **MOTHERHOOD IS A JOB**: *So how's domestic life? Don't you just love being a mom? Lynette responded as she always did. She lied. It's the best job I've ever had* (DH 5: 26.05-26.36); *All mothers know they have to protect their children, but some of us take our job more seriously than others* (DH 5: 45.47-45.56). The examples listed above testify to the fact that in the contemporary American world-view, the role of a mother is mostly seen as a job associated with responsibility and performing certain duties. One more conceptual metaphor with the target domain MOTHERHOOD was revealed as part of the **MOTHERHOOD IS SPORT** metaphor: *Susan took her victories where she found them* (DH 23: 1.38-1.42). This metaphor shows that motherhood and parenting overall are also a matter of competition, which is a characteristic feature of sports.

#### **WOMAN-PROFESSIONAL conceptual metaphors** (21% of the sample)

The concept WOMAN-PROFESSIONAL was described through such conceptual features as *career* and *job*. The results of the research show that the concept CAREER is part of the orientational conceptual metaphor connected with human spatial experience (Lakoff 2003: 56-60; Taylor 1995: 134-135). **CAREER IS UPWARD MOVEMENT** metaphor is found in the following episode: *Of course, she didn't cook much while she was moving up the corporate ladder* (DH 1: 3.27-3.34). The lexical unit *corporate ladder*, which denotes “the hierarchy of posts with a particular corporation or corporations in general” (CFOD), and the phrasal verb *move up* verbalize the corresponding concept UPWARD MOVEMENT with its conceptual features of *movement forward* and *movement up*. One more conceptual metaphor revealed in this group is the structural metaphor **CAREER IS SPORT**: *She was known for her power lunches, her eye-catching presentations, and her ruthlessness in wiping out the competition* (DH 5: 1.10-1.23). The conceptual features *competition*, *achievement of results*, *being first* (CFOD) indicate that in modern American society a career is associated with competition and achievement of desirable outcomes.

#### **WOMAN-HOUSEKEEPER conceptual metaphors** (15% of the sample)

This fourth group of conceptual metaphors is specified in such structural metaphors as **HOUSEWORK IS SPORT**: *Competition – it means different things to different people. In suburbia, it means keeping up with the Joneses. On Wisteria Lane, that means keeping up with Bree Van De Kamp* (DH 7: 0.43-0.56); **HOUSEWORK IS A DUTY**: *You're this plastic suburban housewife with her pearls and her spatula who says things like "we owe the Hendersons a dinner " Where's the woman I fell in love with who used to burn the toast and drink milk out of the carton and laugh? I*

*need her. Not this cold, perfect thing you've become* (DH 1: 36.58-37.50), **HOUSEWORK IS PSYCHOLOGICAL RELIEF**: *Would you like to respond to what Rex just said? Is there some truth there? Do you use housework as a way to disengage emotionally? Of course* (DH 2: 22.05.22.10). The conceptual metaphors presented emphasize the usual way of life of suburban housewives whose houses are a matter of personal pride, with the neighbours competing for the title of the best housekeeper. The concepts SPORT and DUTY are evidence of the fact that modern American society gradually moves away from the traditional values of the 19<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> century where housekeeping was an inseparable part of women's life. Only one of the characters, Bree van de Kamp, does housework trying to find consolation in it. The other women characters avoid doing work around the house and hire housekeepers to help them.

At the final stage of the research, the identified conceptual metaphors were examined with reference to the main women-characters of the TV-series. The prevalence of certain conceptual features in the source domain of the conceptual metaphors of the sample allowed revealing the predominant aspects of the main characters' lives – love relationships, motherhood, career, and housekeeping, which pointed to their priorities. Thus, it was revealed that the figurative component of Lynnet Scavo's image integrates the features of a mother (MOTHERHOOD IS A CHALLENGE, MOTHERHOOD IS WORK), partner (FAMILY LIFE IS A MERRY-GO-ROUND, QUARELL IS A MILITARY BATTLE), and an unrealized social climber (CAREER IS SPORT, CAREER IS UPWARD MOVEMENT); Gabriell Solis' image displays the characteristics of a vain lover in a relationship who cheats on her well-off husband and manipulates marriage (INFIDELITY IS A RESCUE, INFIDELITY IS A REST, MARRIAGE IS AN OBJECT); the image of Susan Mayer is presented as a romantic partner (LOVE RELATIONSHIP IS SPORT, LOVE RELATIONSHIP IS A ROAD) and a devoted mother (MOTHERHOOD IS SUCCESS) while Bree Van De Kamp turns out to be a traditional housewife (HOUSEWORK IS RELIEF, HOUSEWIFE IS A PERFECTIONIST, HOUSEWIFE IS A RIVAL) and a desperate mother (MOTHER IS A CRIMINAL, MOTHER IS A RESCUER).

#### 4. Conclusions and Prospects for Future Research

The present paper has revealed that the figurative component of the concept WOMAN is represented in the target domain by four basic conceptual features – *marriage, motherhood, career, housework*, which are metaphorically interpreted. Depending on the concept of the source domain, the four groups of metaphors WOMAN-PARTNER, WOMAN-MOTHER, WOMAN-PROFESSIONAL, and WOMAN-HOUSEKEEPER were identified as ontological (MARRIAGE IS AN OBJECT, LOVE RELATIONSHIP IS A PATH, MARRIAGE IS MACHINERY/VEHICLE, FAMILY LIFE IS A CYCLE), MARRIAGE IS AN ACTIVITY), structural (FAMILY IS SPORT, FAMILY IS WAR, MOTHERHOOD IS A JOB, HOUSEWORK IS SPORT), and orientational (CAREER IS UPWARD MOVEMENT) conceptual metaphors. The conceptual metaphors revealed prove that although modern American women mostly have a hectic lifestyle (FAMILY LIFE IS A CYCLE, CAREER IS SPORT) and carry the responsibility for rearing their children (MOTHERHOOD IS A JOB) and keeping the household (HOUSEWORK IS A DUTY), the contemporary American society witnesses a shift from the image of a traditional woman – a wife, mother, and housekeeper who is ready to sacrifice her professional development for the sake of her family – to a woman-professional who strives for self-realization at work and in the community overall and views many of her traditional chores as an inevitable duty. However, the WOMAN-PARTNER conceptual metaphors, which constitute the most significant group of the sample revealed in the TV-series (44%), point to the fact that despite professional aspirations, love relationship and marriage remain the main priority for the modern American woman. Further research can be conducted based on other modern English TV-series in an attempt to determine how a woman's image is conceptualized in other cultures (British, Australian, etc.).

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## **METAPHORICAL REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN'S IMAGES IN THE CONTEMPORARY AMERICAN TV-SERIES**

**Oksana Kozachyshyna, Antonina Mosiichuk**

English Philology Chair, Vinnytsia Mykhailo Kotsyubynskyi State Pedagogical University, Vinnytsia, Ukraine

### **Abstract**

**Background:** The analysis of women's images from the perspective of cognitive poetics aims to explain the cognitive processes underlying their perception, processing, and interpretation by the reader. Offering a new approach to the investigation of the image, cognitive poetics allows viewing a woman's image as a linguo-cognitive construct comprising the conceptual and verbal facets. The conceptual facet is revealed through its notional/non-metaphorical (concept WOMAN) and figurative/metaphorical (conceptual metaphors) components while the verbal facet is associated with the corresponding lexical means of expressing the concept in the TV-series excerpts.

**Purpose:** The purpose of the article is to describe the figurative component of women's images in the contemporary American TV-series "Desperate Housewives" by analyzing the specifics of their metaphorical conceptualization and distinguishing types of conceptual metaphors women's images are grounded in.

**Results:** The paper characterizes women's images in terms of the four basic aspects of the modern American woman's self-realization in society by associating them with the corresponding concepts of MARRIAGE (WOMAN-PARTNER), MOTHERHOOD (WOMAN-MOTHER), CAREER (WOMAN-PROFESSIONAL), and HOUSEKEEPING (WOMAN-HOUSEKEEPER).

**Discussion:** Aspects of women's images such as MARRIAGE, MOTHERHOOD, CAREER, HOUSEWORK are metaphorically interpreted in terms of the three types of conceptual metaphors: ontological (MARRIAGE IS AN OBJECT, LOVE RELATIONSHIP IS A PATH, MARRIAGE IS MACHINERY/VEHICLE, FAMILY LIFE IS A CYCLE, MARRIAGE IS AN ACTIVITY), structural (FAMILY IS SPORT, FAMILY IS WAR, MOTHERHOOD IS A JOB, HOUSEWORK IS SPORT) and orientational (CAREER IS UPWARD MOVEMENT). Together, they testify to the specifics of conceptualizing women's images in modern American society where a woman shifts from the traditional roles of a wife, mother, and housekeeper to a woman-professional. The WOMAN-PARTNER conceptual metaphors, which constitute the most significant group revealed in the TV-series (44% of the sample), prove that love relationship and marriage remain the main priority for the modern American woman despite her professional aspirations.

**Keywords:** woman's image, metaphorical representation, conceptual metaphor, contemporary TV-series, cognitive poetics

### **Vitae**

Oksana Kozachyshyna is Candidate of Philology, Associate Professor of the English Philology Chair at Vinnytsia Mykhailo Kotsyubynskyi State Pedagogical University. Her areas of research interests include translation studies, gender linguistics, cognitive linguistics

**Correspondence:** okozachyshyna@vspu.edu.ua

Antonina Mosiichuk is Candidate of Philology, Associate Professor of the English Philology Chair at Vinnytsia Mykhailo Kotsyubynskyi State Pedagogical University. Her areas of research interests include cognitive linguistics, cognitive poetics, cognitive semiotics, and linguosynergetics.

**Correspondence:** amosiichuk@vspu.edu.ua

Надійшла до редакції 21 березня 2021 року

Рекомендована до друку 5 квітня 2021 року

**Олександр Межов**

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5299-417X>

**Марина Навальна**

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5064-3122>

**Наталія Костусяк**

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9795-6038>

DOI 10.31558/1815-3070.2021.41.18

УДК 811.161.2'373:364.63]:070

## ЗАСОБИ ВИРАЖЕННЯ КОМУНІКАТИВНО-ПРАГМАТИЧНОЇ ІНТЕНЦІЇ ОБРАЗИ В СУЧАСНИХ МЕДІАТЕКСТАХ

*У статті проаналізовано кодифіковані й некодифіковані негативнооцінні лексеми з власне-образливою конотацією та контекстуально набутою, які формують інвективний континуум в українських медіатекстах. Виділено тематичні групи образливої лексики семантичного діапазону «Людина», які відбивають фізичні, психоемоційні, морально-етичні якості адресата, його етнічну, соціально-професійну, гендерну, конфесійну, політичну належність. Визначено їхній психолінгвістичний потенціал та прагматичне спрямування. Установлено лінгвістичні й позалінгвальні чинники інтенсивності негативного впливу інвективи на психологію індивіда та масову свідомість, яка залежить, з одного боку, від змістового наповнення образливого вислову, його спрямування, з іншого – від вікових, індивідуально-психологічних особливостей реципієнта, рівня його вихованості, ментальності, темпераменту, стресостійкості, соціального статусу.*

**Ключові слова:** комунікативна інтенція, образа, інвективна лексика, мовленнєвий вплив, реципієнт, адресат, адресант, медіатекст.

Однією з базових міжгалузевих категорій у сучасній науковій парадигмі (комунікативній лінгвістиці, лінгвопрагматиці, психолінгвістиці, медіалінгвістиці, політичній лінгвістиці, юрислінгвістиці, дискурсології, соціолінгвістиці та ін.) є категорія впливу, різновид якої – психологічний вплив як наслідок комунікативної взаємодії мовця й реципієнта. Існує чимало дефініцій цього поняття, серед яких заслуговує на увагу визначення О. Сидоренко з акцентом на засобах його реалізації: «Психологічний вплив – це вплив на психічний стан, думки, почуття й дії іншої людини за допомогою винятково психологічних засобів (вербальних, паралінгвістичних або невербальних) з наданням йому права й часу відповідати на цей вплив» (Сидоренко 1997: 125). Психологами та лінгвістами вже не раз доведено, що саме слово з усіх мовних і немовних засобів має найбільший психологічний вплив на адресата, як позитивний, так і негативний. Дієвим засобом негативного вербального впливу є інвектива, що слугує мовленнєвим реалізатором такого виду психологічного впливу, як «деструктивна критика – зневажливі або образливі судження-висловлення про особистість опонента, грубий, а іноді агресивний осуд, ганьблення або осміяння його вад, вчинків» (Сидоренко 1997: 129).