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Cultural and Gender Differences in Perceiving Outdoor Activities: cross-cultural comparison between Russia and the UK

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Cultural and Gender Differences in

Perceiving Outdoor Activities:

cross-cultural comparison between Russia and the UK

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Abstract

Outdoor education is one of the rapidly developing areas nowadays. However, it is introduced in a limited number of countries; the associated literature is primarily in English. Nevertheless, being in the outdoors and experiencing a landscape is a universal activity. Therefore, this thesis is devoted to finding out cultural and gender differences in perceiving outdoor activities through the example of British and Russian Internet forums and to indicating possible implications of these differences for outdoor guides working with representatives of these cultures.

The first part of the paper is devoted to the theoretical overview of the problem, providing necessary definitions and currently existing points of view in the academia. It is followed by the part devoted to research methodology where main research methods are explained and the thesis outline is provided.

The second half of the thesis presents the results of an empirical research study, conducted using the latent sematic analysis method. The third chapter is dedicated to the results of the study and a brief analysis of each subgroup (Russian males, Russian females, British males, British females) including a summarising diagram to each of them. The last chapter is devoted to interpretations of the results and to the discussion on cultural and gender differences in experiencing the outdoors.

The research has shown that although gender differences in perceiving outdoor activities and landscapes within the Russian and the British discourses have been found, they seem to be culturally bound. Therefore, gender is a cultural construct and gender differences are stimulated by and generated within a certain culture, whereas cultural differences can be found in the overall purpose of going on a trip and one's focus during the journey. Three dissimilarities regarding the focus of attention and the meaning of the former to outdoor practitioners are explained and given possible interpretations.

The topic and the findings of the research study are pioneer for the academia and could serve as a basis for further discussion.

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Introduction

The topic of my master thesis is "Cultural and gender differences in perceiving outdoor activities: cross-cultural comparison between Russia and the UK". I find this research extremely relevant to the scientific society of nowadays because more and more value is put on cross-cultural investigations. Moreover, gender issues are also of great interest to current science. Gender linguistics as a field appeared only in the late 1900s, which is connected with the development of post-modern philosophy. One of the main research questions of gender linguistics is to investigate verbal behaviour of men and women, i.e. to see how gender behaviour is constructed and what factors (e.g., the Internet) it is influenced by. Therefore, the research responds to the needs of modern science.

As far as outdoor education is concerned, the current thesis will be new to the sphere. The area of outdoor activities is a new scientific branch and is just developing, which requires further research in a whole plethora of topics and fields. The research I am intending to carry out is absolutely new to the sphere because there has been no research about the Russian perspective on doing and, therefore, also perceiving outdoor activities. Russia does not have outdoor education as an officially recognized type of alternative education. The whole concept is a lacuna. Nevertheless, people do perform outdoor activities and get engaged in outdoor recreation and nature tourism or go to places to explore the beauty and pleasure of natural sceneries, and later on talk and write about their experiences and viewpoints. This allows us to make a comparison between the perspective of Russians and the British on perceiving the outdoors. Once we are done with determining the differences, we will be able to transfer the results of the research to the area of outdoor education, to see potential problematic issues in it and possible ways of dealing with them, and to better understand how people living in various socio-geographic contexts explore and comprehend human-nature relationships. Outdoor education does not have a world-wide popularity nowadays but it has a huge potential and great chance of spreading further and further. Hence, I find it extremely important to carry

out a research at the present time to show that although the principles of outdoor education can remain the same, certain things need to be adjusted when introducing it to different cultures.

I find myself eligible to do the research because I have lived my entire life (before joining the TEOS programme) in Russia. I am very aware of its cultural peculiarities in general. I am a native Russian speaker, which will make it possible for me to make a deeper analysis of the samples in Russian. The level of my English is advanced and should provide a good basis for my interpretation of the samples in the English language. Nevertheless, all the conclusions about English will be kindly proof-read by a native British university lecturer (Dr. Chris Loynes).

I have done my first degree in linguistics and I am quite familiar with the approach to the research, i.e. discourse analysis. I am very excited about comparing the cultures through languages because this is the scope of my scientific interests.

The <u>research hypothesis</u> is: representatives of different cultures (British and Russian) and genders take back different experiences and live through the trip in a different way due to the differences in their mentality.

The <u>main research questions</u> for the thesis are:
- How is language connected with culture and what implications this brings to the field of outdoor recreational activities and journeys?
- What is the connection between language and thought?
- How is landscape connected with our culture and language? Do representatives of different cultures perceive landscapes differently?
- Are there any cultural differences in perceiving outdoor activities?
- Can we speak about gender issues in experiencing outdoor activities?

- What are the cultural and gender implications when implementing outdoor activities within outdoor educational contexts?

The <u>structure</u> of the thesis is as follows:

1. the theoretical part devoted to the discussion of the above stated research questions;

2. the chapter describing the methodology of the research study and the thesis outline;

3. presentation of the empirical research study subdivided into the Russian and the British discourses presenting the genders separately;

4. analysis and discussion of gender and cultural differences in the outdoors and their possible meaning for outdoor guides;

5. conclusion;

6. references.

Language, Thought, and Culture

Nowadays scientists in different disciplines, such as linguistics, social societies, and outdoor pedagogy pay more and more attention to cultural studies. The problem of whether or not there is a connection between culture, thought (cognition), and language has been causing hot debates among representatives of different sciences and scientific fields, such as philosophers, art historians, and linguists. We live in times of globalization where so many cultures intertwine and mingle with each other, so that it is hard to separate one from another. However, we cannot help but notice that representatives of different cultures tend to have a different opinion on a whole plethora of things, share different routines and values.

The language people speak may tell us a lot about the way they are thinking; the way people are categorizing the world. At the same time, language is a component of culture, thus, language and culture are connected and interdependent. This means that we can make conclusions about some culture when researching the language attributed to it; and the other way round, knowing the culture of a certain nation we might be able to explain certain peculiarities of the language these people speak (Barker, 2012).

Russian cognitive philologists (Кубрякова, Шахнарович, Сахарный, 2001; Маслова, 2005) differentiate between the conceptual and the linguistic 'pictures of the world'. The conceptual picture of the world is a very complex phenomenon and it embraces one's view of the world (including mentality, etc.) and one's place in the social structure of this world and the interrelation between the human and the animate world; the human and the inanimate world. The verbalized part of this picture is the linguistic picture of the world (Кубрякова, Шахнарович, Сахарный, 2001). Hence, the linguistic picture of the world is a part of the conceptual picture of the world and deals with everything that is connected with language, i.e. everything that can be investigated through language or through linguistic forms. Consequently, the linguistic picture is influenced by the conceptual one. The picture of the world is the way one imagines the

world in his/her own mind. This phenomenon is more complicated than the linguistic picture, i.e. that part of the conceptual picture, which has "attachment" to the language and is interpreted through linguistic forms (Маслова, 2005, p. 8).

In order to see the differences in mentality and the ways of thinking, scientists (e.g., cognitive linguists) are determined to see what shapes one's understanding of the world, whether or not cultural heritage has an essential part in that process, i.e. they would like to see whether representatives of different cultures have a different conceptual picture of the world that they share or at least the one that would bear a lot of common characteristics. However, as it has already been mentioned, the conceptual picture of the world is an abstract phenomenon, constantly changing and existing only in the mind of a person, which means that to investigate one's conceptual picture of the world we would need to actually follow one's thoughts and, roughly speaking, get inside of one's mind, which is impossible at the current stage of the development of science. Nevertheless, there is a way of simplifying a procedure and getting a glimpse at the conceptual picture of the world. People are the only creatures that are able to communicate their messages (including feelings and emotions) by means of a common language. Of course, what people say or write reflects only partially what they are thinking about. However, this is already a start. Analyzing people's utterances makes it possible to make suppositions about their linguistic picture of the world and put the latter under thorough analysis. And as the linguistic picture of the world is a part of the conceptual picture of the world, this analysis allows scientists to draw conclusions on a bigger scale, i.e. to see whether representatives of different cultures and mentalities tend to think differently and categorize the world in different ways.

However, before coming closer to the connection between the concepts of 'language', 'culture', and 'thought' ('cognition') I find it essential to define them. The definitions will show how broad all the three concepts are and how this will influence the complexity of their interrelations.

Having analyzed the key linguistic literature and got acquainted with the main theories in the theory of language, I have singled out three main approaches to defining *language*, which do not exclude each other but rather compliment, exploring different dimensions of language. I will not focus on a narrow definition but take into consideration all the three. According to the first approach, language is connected with thought and feelings: language is "the outer appearance of the spirit of a people; the language is their spirit and the spirit their language" (Humboldt, 1999). The second approach reveals the communicative nature of language, i.e. people intentionally create linguistic utterances to communicate their message to the others (Crystal, 2001). The third approach describes language as a system of signs (Saussure), which opens a further discussion of the arbitrariness of these signs. I am more inclined to the broader definition given by Sapir (1921): "language is a specifically human way of transmitting ideas, feelings and desires with the help of a system of arbitrary signs" (where, according to Sapir, arbitrariness means the absence of logical connection between the shape of the word, i.e. its sound- and graphic form, and the meaning of this word).

According to Sapir (1921), language does not exist without *culture*, under which he understands (and we accept his definition) "the socially inherited assemblage of practices and beliefs that determines the texture of our lives".

Noam Chomsky (1983) has defined *cognition* as "an overall term that includes every system of belief, knowledge, understanding, interpretation, perception, and so on"; language being just one of these systems. Lakoff (1993) philosophizing about the nature of the poetic metaphor comes to the conclusion that it [the poetic metaphor] is not actually born in a language but rather that its locus is "in the way we conceptualize one mental domain in terms of another" (p. 203). This means that cognition would be a domain governing the language but being influenced by it in any case because language is part of thought. When we put it into practice, this is easy to understand. For instance, people tend to

think in their language. But it would be wrong to say that there is no thinking beyond linguistic borders: a painter creating a work of Art, a musician comprising music, a chess-player planning a strategy, a kayaker navigating through wild water or a skier bending his knees at the right angle to turn or go downhill – all these are examples of non-linguistic thinking. Moreover, we would not be able to call it a nonverbal language either because there is no system there and no coding-decoding processes since this way of thinking is not meant to achieve successful communication with the receiver of the information; the purpose is rather to transmit and realize the idea putting it into practice.

A practical example to understand abstract theory could be, for instance, an artist creating a picture. During this process he/she is thinking in images and transmitting his/her feelings and ideas using his/her own means, whilst the observer would decode the message basing that on his/her personal interpretation, so that there is no communication of the message: the message sent and the message received might be absolutely different (we might think of cubism or post-impressionism here, for example).

Another domain would be a kayaker navigating through wild water for here the receiver of the information is not a human being (a kayak). We cannot deny that the kayaker is sending certain 'messages', i.e. transmitting his ideas because he/she wants his/her actions to have an immediate result in the way the boat is moving. On the other hand, the boat is incapable of decoding the information sent to it because it is an inanimate object. Therefore, there is no language used here but some other way of non-verbal thinking and behavior.

The above given information leads us to the idea that language, thought (cognition), and culture are interconnected. When investigating languages, we might be able to make assumptions of how representatives of particular cultures tend to think. "Although cognition is not necessarily linguistic, nonetheless the acquisition of language gives much of our information processing, or thinking, a cultural dimension" (Barker, 2012, p. 131).

Gender Differences in Narrative Discourse

What is Discourse? What Type of Discourse is Narrative?

The level of discourse is the highest level of a language, which is also called the pragmatic level. Discourse is a text with its extra-linguistic features (not just the words the author used to create the text but also the situation when it was created, the overall purpose of producing the text, and the additional emotions and feelings the author wanted to transmit, plus the expected response of the receiver). In other words, discourse is language in use. Ferdinand de Saussure has described it as 'parole' (the actual speech act), which is differentiated from the 'langue' (language as something abstract and universal). I will focus on the 'parole' as to investigate 'langue' one would need to work with dictionaries and grammar books only. 'Langue' has no connotations, it is purely the abstract system of signs people share and use to communicate with each other. 'Parole', on the other hand, is everything people say or write. And to see how people are thinking, we need to see which utterances they are producing. Further on in this work, I will use the word 'language' as a synonym to 'parole' and 'discourse'.

If I were to define narrative discourse, I would say that it is the type of discourse which mainly serves the intention of the producer of the discourse to describe what has happened (how it all started, what happened first, what happened next, what the result was). Although narrative discourse may contain certain features and even longer abstracts which would rather be described as argumentation (when the author wants to prove certain ideas providing arguments) or description (when the intention of the speaker is to describe an object, a feeling, etc., i.e. to provide a description of a certain phenomenon), the discourse remains narrative when its overall purpose is to narrate about a certain event.

Does Language of the Two Genders Differ?

Gender issues are of great interest to current science. Gender linguistics as a field appeared only in the late 1900s, which is connected with the development of post-modern and feminist philosophy. One of the

main research questions of gender linguistics is to investigate verbal behaviour of men and women, i.e. to see how gender behaviour is constructed and what factors (e.g., the Internet) it is influenced by.

The question of sex/gender is not as easy to answer in modern times as it used to be. Biological sex and social gender do not always correspond. A lot of modern societies agree upon the fact that the sex, acquired by the person prior to birth, does not determine his/her personality. It is universally argued that people should be free to choose their social roles. "Acceptance of the idea that sex is a cultural construct leads to the blurring of the male-female distinction. It allows for ambiguous and dual sexualities" (Barker, 2012, p. 245) and for a common ground of humanity to exist. However, the latter is the case of sexual minorities though. The mainstream tendency is to be either a male or a female, the sex one got at birth. Hence, when speaking about gender differences in a narrative discourse, I will take into consideration only the two main genders. I do not expect though the gender discourses to be very different from each other because in any case there is a 'common' ground for human communication and understanding and meaning-making ('gender neutral language').

As I have manifested above, language helps us see one's thinking processes and is tightly connected with culture and identity. Nevertheless, gender is a dynamic cultural construct and a part of one's identity as well. The gendered aspect of language may vary historically and cross-culturally, but also throughout individual life history. Therefore, it would be quite logical to assume that there should be certain linguistic differences in a female and male speech. And the other way round, as Hornscheidt (2005) puts it, one's gender identity consists in the way people are addressing the person and the way people are categorizing the interlocutor because people tend to use different linguistic patterns with representatives of different genders. Hence, gender identity determines one's behaviour (also linguistic behaviour) to other people but at the same time, the behaviour of other people towards the person. However, gender alone does not determine one's speech. When we're analysing discourse, we also need to take into

consideration such factors as race, social status, age, and the communicative situation (Hornscheidt, 2005).

Landscape

Language and mentality are interconnected and interdependent, which means that if something is connected with our language, it influences our way of thinking and processing the information we receive. That is why, to see whether representatives of different cultures (i.e. people with different mentalities) have a different perception of landscape and nature, we need to find out whether or not language was passively formed by the influence of landscape or actively formed through human interaction with the landscapes they were part of; or maybe even languages are so arbitrary that they were formed regardless of the landscape but as random sound clusters as a result of mutual agreement to give names to the surrounding objects caused by the need of a common language for communication. And on the other hand, if we find out that landscape facilitates certain ways of thinking, then we can be sure that we can analyze in by means of language. I will comment on different points of view already existing in the academia and express my own position in relation to the issue. But first of all, I would like to explain what I understand under the notion 'landscape'.

There are numerous approaches to defining *landscape* and the definition of landscape remains a highly debatable issue among geographers. For example, Schmithüsen (1968, p. 11) defines a landscape as "Inbegriff der Beschaffenheit eines auf Grund der Totalbetrachtung als Einheit begreifbaren Geosphärenteiles von geographisch relevanten Größenordnung" [the epitome of the structure of one of the parts of the geosphere that can be seen as a unity and possesses a geographically relevant order of magnitude]. This definition mainly focuses on the functional aspect of a landscape. For Schmithüsen, a landscape is a dynamic component of the geosphere, which, in its turn, can further be divided into such components as mountains, rivers, forests, etc. Therefore, this approach is purely geographical. And it excludes people from the landscape. Roughly

speaking, in this definition landscape equals nature, which is why I do not agree with it.

Daniel and Cosgrove (1988, 1), sharing a completely opposite point of view, define landscape as an immaterial "cultural image, a pictorial way of representing or symbolizing surroundings". Hence, the authors believe that a landscape is something cultural and very subjective and existing only in the minds of people. Ingold (1993), in his turn, does not share this point of view because for him language is not part of our imagination but people are part of landscape as well as landscape is part of us: "Spatial differentiation implies spatial fragmentation. This is not so of the landscape, however. For a place in the landscape is not 'cut out' from the whole, either on the plane of ideas or on that of material substance" (p. 192). As a researcher, I find Ingold's approach to understanding landscape more relevant to the current study but, at the same time, I agree with Daniel and Cosgrove on the connection between landscape and culture.

So, landscape is regarded by me as something integral and connected to both nature and culture. Coming back to the connection between language and landscape, the following theories are the most recurrent in the academia. Widdowson (1996), for instance, claims that all linguistic signs are arbitrary and do not have any connection to the outer world. In other terms, Widdowson says that language when appearing did not rely on the existing objects to help create words and other linguistic units. So, whatever people's motivation to name this or that phenomenon this or that way was, it had nothing to do with people's environment.

Abram (2005), on the other hand, argues that language 'belongs' to landscape, therefore, landscape 'belongs' to language. He gives an example of such words as 'rush', 'gush', 'wash', and 'splash', which we use to describe water objects when hiking (p. 82). These words contain the sound [ʃ] that imitates the sound of falling water. The connection between the landscape and the word is explicit in such onomatopoeic words. Therefore, Abram (ibid) suggests that the "language "belongs" to the animate landscape as much as it "belongs" to ourselves".

Merleau-Ponty (1968) is an adherent of the embodied philosophy of language. He has expressed the idea that the embodied experience 'comes first' and thus influences the development of language. He proves his idea with the example of humans growing up: babies grasp gestures, exclamatory words, interjections, and onomatopoeic words much faster than all the other words. They communicate with denotative meanings (the direct meanings of the word) only. Connotations (additional meanings, expressing evaluation, emotions, etc), which are more important for conversations of grown-ups are not present in children's speech

Lakoff and Johnson (2007) deal with the cognitive-embodied dualism. Through the examples of metaphors existing in the language, they show that metaphors are not just a linguistic matter but also, which is even more important, belong to the level of concepts, which means that metaphors appeared in a language through embodied experience and as a part of culture.

Taking all these points of view into account, I would say that the majority still agree that language appeared with the connection to the landscape and due to the embodied experience. This means that representatives of different cultures should presumably experience being in nature differently, which brings us back to the research hypothesis, which I am going to prove or disprove in course of conducting my empirical research study.

Research Methodology

Critical discourse analysis

The main approach to research is critical discourse analysis. I will sample messages from Internet forums (the UK and Russia) devoted to trip reports and analyze them according to the intention of the communicant and the linguistic means used by the narrator. Hence, I will conduct discourse analysis. *Intention* (of the communicant) is understood as a mental stimulus that has impelled the communicant to create a linguistic utterance as a means of verbal realization of his/her attitude towards the subject of the discussion (Gromorushkina, 2012).

Although I have already described the notion of discourse above, I think it is important to remind of the definition again and to enlarge upon it here, pointing out the characteristic features of discourse relevant to critical discourse analysis. Discourse is "a general mode of semiosis, i.e. meaningful symbolic behavior. Discourse is language-in-action" (Blommaert, 2005, p. 2). Although discourse is seen as part of language, it is more than that. If we speak about written discourse (which is the case in my work), discourse embraces the text, the pictures in the text, the headlines, i.e. all the symbols used to communicate a message. It also has a space-time frame: the same trip report written in an Internet-blog, in some Internet-forum or in a diary is already a different discourse. This is why I will use only Internet community discourse as sample material for my thesis in order to observe a similar space-time environment.

Critical discourse analysis is rather a notion used to describe the approach to conducting a research than a research methodology. It is neither a methodology nor a method. It embraces a plethora of theories, methods, analyses, and applications. "Critical discourse analysis (CDA) is a type of discourse analytical research that primarily studies the way social power abuse, dominance, and inequality are enacted, reproduced, and resisted by text and talk in the social and political context. With such dissident research, critical discourse analysts take explicit position, and thus want to understand, expose, and ultimately resist social inequality" (Van Dijk, 2001,

p. 352) Unlike in social discourse analysis, the researcher focuses more on practice rather than on theory with the purpose of taking a position and afterwards bringing about certain changes instead of being a passive observer (Van Dijk, 1997).

Although there are different approaches to defining what a CDA is, they all agree upon the following five CDA features:

1. "the character of social and cultural processes and structures is partly linguistic-discursive": language belongs to culture and society;

2. "discourse is both constitutive [to the social world] and constituted [by other social practices]";

3. "language use should be empirically analysed within its social context";

4. "discourse functions ideologically": "discursive practices contribute to the creation and reproduction of unequal power relations between social groups – for example, between social classes, women and men, ethnic minorities and the majority";

5. "critical research": it is not a neutral research, but the one committed to social change (Jorgensen, Phillips, 2002, p. 60-64).

Hermeneutics As Research Method

One of the most popular research methods within CDA and the one I am going to apply is hermeneutics, which can be understood as "the method of grasping and producing meaning relations" (Wodak, Meyer, 2001, p. 16). One can also speak of the so called hermeneutic circle, which is defined as an "ontological condition of understanding; proceeds from a communality that binds us to tradition in general and that of our object of interpretation in particular; provides the link between finality and universality, and between theory and praxis" (Bleicher, 1980, p. 267). It implies that "understanding has a circular structure [as] understanding always relates to some phenomenon or other" (Butler, 1998, p. 290). It means that in order to

conduct a hermeneutic inquiry the researcher needs to see the whole context to understand one part of it and, the other way round, to see the whole he/she requires its component parts. The concept of the hermeneutic circle was developed by Martin Heidegger, who had a strong influence on the development of hermeneutics in the XXth century.

Heidegger devoted a lot of his attention to the matter of language. His ideas in general lay the foundation for my research. "Man speaks only as he responds to language. Language speaks. Its speaking speaks for us in what has been spoken" (Heidegger, 1971, p. 210). That means that one "does not have language as an attribute of his own. Rather, he is appropriated to language and speaks only in response to it" (Dauenhauer, 1988, p. 212). This emphasizes the cultural dimension of a language and the fact that a language is a universal system of signs.

Coming back to the hermeneutic circle, I find it important to mention the essence of it. The hermeneutic circle is a metaphor used to describe the interdependence of interpretation and understanding. Before Heidegger the hermeneutic circle was seen as a vicious circle and philosopher were looking for a way to escape it. Heidegger and Gadamer, following Heidegger's ideas, shared the opinion that the hermeneutic circle is not bad at all. According to them, researchers should look for a proper way to enter the circle rather than to escape it.

Heidegger introduced the terms of *Vorhabe* (fore-having)*, Vorsicht* (fore-sight) and   *Vorgriff* (fore-conception) as the fore-structures of *Verstehen* (Understanding), i.e. the structures that precede our understanding of a text (Bleicher, 1980). Accordingly, when we just get acquainted with a text we already have a certain image of it in our consciousness. This means that our personal experience, traditions, mentality and our own thoughts and ideas form a certain pre-text that correlates with the original text of the author.

Therefore, when we are going through the Understanding of any text, be it fiction or non-fiction, that belongs to a foreign culture, i.e. possessing a foreign philosophy and representing a foreign mentality, we

still understand the text through our personal experience and prejudices. In other words, we to a great extent 'write' our own story in our heads, developing our own ideas. In the very end, what the author has put in his/her text will never be totally understood by the reader. The filtration of what the objective (initially meant by the author) and the subjective (what we as readers see in that text) meanings of the text is an eternal process (Фомин, 2012).

Sharing the ideas described above, I do not claim to extract objective meaning from the texts I am going to analyze. However, being aware of the hermeneutic cycle, I will try to minimise my influence as a researcher upon the interpretation of data, relying on such methods of linguistic discourse analysis that make it possible to focus more on the objective matter of a language. I will also make my influence become as visible as possible: instead of deceiving myself in saying that I can be objective in carrying out research I will reflect upon my personal world-view.

Method of Mixed Analysis

I am aware that neither qualitative nor quantitative research is enough to make a thorough analysis of a phenomenon; therefore a mixed analysis is required. Hence, I will conduct a qualitative-quantitative research. My analysis will be carried out primarily by statistical methods. Using a special computer programme, I will first of all make conclusions based on statistics and observe general patterns. However, I will also read the samples afterwards to be able to make an in-depth analysis of certain linguistic units when required.

Method of Semantic Analysis

"Latent Semantic Analysis (LSA) is a theory and method for extracting and representing the contextual-usage meaning of words by statistical computations applied to a large corpus of text. The underlying idea is that the totality of information about all the word contexts in which a given word does and does not appear provides a set of mutual constraints

that largely determines the similarity of meaning of words and set of words to each other." (What is LSA, n. d.).

I will use the LSA method to obtain objective data about the texts. This will enable me to count the most recurrent words in a discourse and help me divide the text into its semantic fields (fields of meaning). The LSA method is absolutely mathematical. I will use the following website to do the statistical part: http://advego.ru/text/seo/. The programme sees the text as a matrix and is able to give text statistics (number of words, amount of meaningful words) and to single out the semantic core: the most recurrent words in a discourse.

Triangulation

I personally have a great interest in the following research. Although I have a research hypothesis, it is hard to assume anything before the comparison is done, which leaves me very curious and open to all possible outcomes. This openness in itself may serve as a source of deepening or nuancing possible diverse ways of interpretation. Thus, it becomes part of my research method as a kind of 'triangulation'.

I strongly believe that there needs to be more than one approach to a study. Therefore, I would refer to an integrative approach called 'triangulation'. "Triangulation uses multiple sources of data collection and provides a deeper understanding of social phenomena" (Sahragard, n. d.). I will, therefore, use data and theory triangulation: use diverse samples for data collection (in the same time-space reference though) and I will not limit myself to either of the sides of scientific controversial issues. This will give me primary information and a starting point but I will not go further than that with LSA. My purpose is not to work with corpus linguistics and create statistics about written texts in different languages but to go deeply into the analysis of certain texts. Therefore, I will conduct a mixed research with certain quantitative elements to serve as a basis for it.

Thesis Outline

To answer the research questions, I have, first of all, delved into the existing discourse and commented upon the existing points of view in the academia on how language, culture, and thought are interconnected. I have focused on the problematic question about what is dominating the whole system: language, thought, or culture (if we indeed can single out a dominant domain here). I have commented upon the existing discourse and expressed my own position, which will further on determine my way of interpreting the data for the research. This will serve as a theoretical foundation for my research.

Further on, I will proceed to the empirical part, i.e. my own research. I will sample trip reports from Russian and British Internet forums and using the LSA method construct semantic fields building the core of Russian and British male and female discourses. The research will be of a qualitative-quantitative character. I will collect 10 samples for either gender for both Russian and British languages, which will make the total number of sampled texts 40. I will be using at least two different communities of discourse for either language and analyze different activities to eliminate the fact that the activity may be dominant or the rules (traditions) of a web-site presuppose a certain way of narrating. Once the sampling and categorizing are done, I will carry out a qualitative research, pointing out cultural and gender differences (or/and similarities) in perceiving the outdoors.

Finally, I aim to connect the results I will have gathered with their practical implementation: what we as outdoor educators should bear in mind when working with different people: people of different nationalities, different genders, and representatives of different cultures and sub-groups. How can we facilitate people's better experience in nature? How can we facilitate one's personal growth? Is there anything that is dominating the experience of people in the outdoors? Is it culture bound? Is it gender bound? What are the strongest and weakest points we might speak about nationwide? What do people focus on (primarily) when doing outdoor activities: themselves, the interrelations with other people, the activities, or

the nature? Why can this be so? And what do we as outdoor facilitators want to achieve? What needs to be changed for us to reach our goals?

These are just a few questions I will strive to answer using the results of my research. It goes without saying that I cannot speak for the whole country or culture because it is physically impossible to gather all the existing samples from the Internet or to be absolutely objective when conducting discourse analysis. Nevertheless, I will do my best to focus on the objective meaning of the linguistic utterances rather than possible interpretations of them, which will also be provided though.

If the hypothesis turns out to be wrong, the research will still be seen as successful because the question to answer will be: why in spite of different mentalities people get similar experiences in the outdoors? Or, if there are no gender differences, we might ask a question: are there indeed gender issues? Or are we just trying to impose them on people? Does experience in nature simply unify people?

Presentation of Empirical Research

In this part of my thesis I would like to present the results of my empirical research in the field of gender issues and cultural differences in perceiving the outdoors.

I will analyze 20 samples (10 male, 10 female) from either of the languages: first, Russian and then English. In this chapter I will only present the data and a brief analysis of it. The gender and cross-cultural comparison will be done in the next chapter.

I will be using the data triangulation and the LSA method to conduct my research. All the messages from the Internet forums will be chosen randomly with regard to the following criteria:

1. the sampled discourse has to be complete and the total length of the text cannot exceed 100.000 symbols;

2. as pictures are also part of discourse but cannot be analysed with the LSA method, trip reports containing photos will be excluded from the sampling material;

3. all the samples have to be written by different people who are native speakers of the target language.

In the section called "statistical information", I will briefly provide details about each of the sampled texts. I will give an Internet-link to the message and comment upon the length of the discourse (amount of words) and its semantic core (the most recurrent words in the text [the forms of 1 word are counted together] - no more than 10 units). The programme I am using to conduct the LSA considers only those words that are at least 3 letters long. Therefore, such words as "I" or "in" will be excluded from the results. However, I find it absolutely sensible because personal pronouns and prepositions are normally the only words that are that short and are rather irrelevant for the semantic analysis because they are used mainly for pure grammatical (and logical) reasons. Coming back to the LSA analysis and the results, I will provide both: the original Russian words used by the author in his/her narration and my translation of them. I will first write the

word, then the number of times it was used in the text and afterwards the translation into English.

Russian Discourse

Russian Males

Statistical Information

1.http://www.borziekarasi.ru/forum/viewtopic.php?t=840&sid=d6cfb098329e876b69500b41d0c8b539

The amount of words: 568

The semantic core:

1. девушка   9   girl
2. все   7   all
3. парень   7   guy
4. блондинка   5   blonde (blondie)
5. кричать   5   shout
6. один   5   one
7. пещера   5   cave
8. делать   4   do

2. http://egiki.ru/forum/viewtopic.php?f=83&t=4110

The amount of words: 77

The semantic core:

1. день   2   day
2. приют   2   shelter
3. когда   2   when

3. http://forum.prokopievsk.ru/showthread.php?t=13208

The amount of words: 288

The semantic core:

1. после   5   after
2. место   4   place
3. оказаться   3   appear
4. группа   3   group
5. поселок   3   settlement (village)

4. http://egiki.ru/forum/viewtopic.php?f=87&t=1147

The amount of words: 553

The semantic core:

1. Таштагол   6   Tashtagol (the name of the place)
2. проводник   4   guide (leader)
3. только   4   only
4. экскурсия   4   field trip
5. мочь   4   can (be able to, be capable of)
6. дорога   4   road (way)

5. http://egiki.ru/forum/viewtopic.php?f=87&t=809

The amount of words: 513

The semantic core:

1. перевал   6   pass (passage)
2. проехать   5   go
3. мангал   5   brazier
4. поэтому   4   that is why
5. дорога   4   road (way)

6. http://egiki.ru/forum/viewtopic.php?f=89&t=3251

The amount of words: 607

The semantic core:

1. пещера   24   cave
2. зимний   9   winter
3. победный   8   winning
4. довольно   4   rather
5. шкурник   4   crack

7. http://pohodnik.info/forum/index.php?PHPSESSID=881s7m1r7fa2pqabq3
9nb5h6o7&topic=561.0

The amount of words: 299

The semantic core:

1. озеро   6   lake
2. Гуркин   4   Gurkin (the name of the guide (an artist as
                        well)

3.	горный	4	mountain (adj.)
4.	место	3	place
5.	река	3	river
6.	человек	3	human (person)

8. http://pohodnik.info/forum/index.php?PHPSESSID=881s7m1r7fa2pqabq3 9nb5h6o7&topic=584.0

The amount of words: 228

The semantic core:

1.	участник	9	participant
2.	база	4	base
3.	группа	4	group
4.	переход	3	crossing (trip)
5.	восхождение	3	ascent (climbing)
6.	один	3	one

9. http://pohodnik.info/forum/index.php?PHPSESSID=881s7m1r7fa2pqabq3 9nb5h6o7&topic=553.0

The amount of words: 4305

The semantic core:

1.	Алексей	25	Alex (the name of the participant)
2.	было	18	was
3.	берег	16	river bank
4.	просто	16	simply
5.	потом	15	afterwards
6.	решить	15	decide
7.	такой	14	such
8.	дорога	13	road (way)

10. http://caravan.hobby.ru/forumnew/index.php?showtopic=3499

The amount of words: 766

The semantic core:

1.	река	15	river
2.	лодка	9	boat
3.	подход	6	approach

4. было   6   was
5. такой   6   such

Analysis

Now that I know the semantic core of each text, I am going to find the notions that form the core of Russian male discourse. Of course, 10 samples are not enough to speak for all Russian males. However, the overall amount of texts I will analyze in the chapter is 40: 10 males and 10 females for either of the countries (the UK and Russia), which makes the survey rather trustworthy. Moreover, as I have mentioned before, I am not intending to carry out a quantitative analysis. Therefore, all the conclusions I will make will be only tendencies pointing at possible differences and similarities.

In order to find the semantic core of Russian male discourse, I will refer to the semantic core of each utterance and see if they overlap with each other. I do not mean words though. I will construct semantic fields: groups of words that share one or more common seems, i.e. minimal components of meaning.

Having conducted the analysis, I have singled out 6 semantic fields present in Russian male discourse (with 3 units unclassified). The results of my analysis of the semantic core of Russian male discourse are represented in Figure 1. The chart however consists only of English words to make it easier for apprehension and since further analysis and comparison will also be conducted in English. If one is interested in the original Russian words, the data can be found in the section above ("Statistical information").

The most common group is "*Connectors*", which consists of 11 words, 3 of which build the semantic core of 2 different discourses. This is the group comprised of such words that mainly help build logical connections within the utterance rather than convey a meaning of their own.
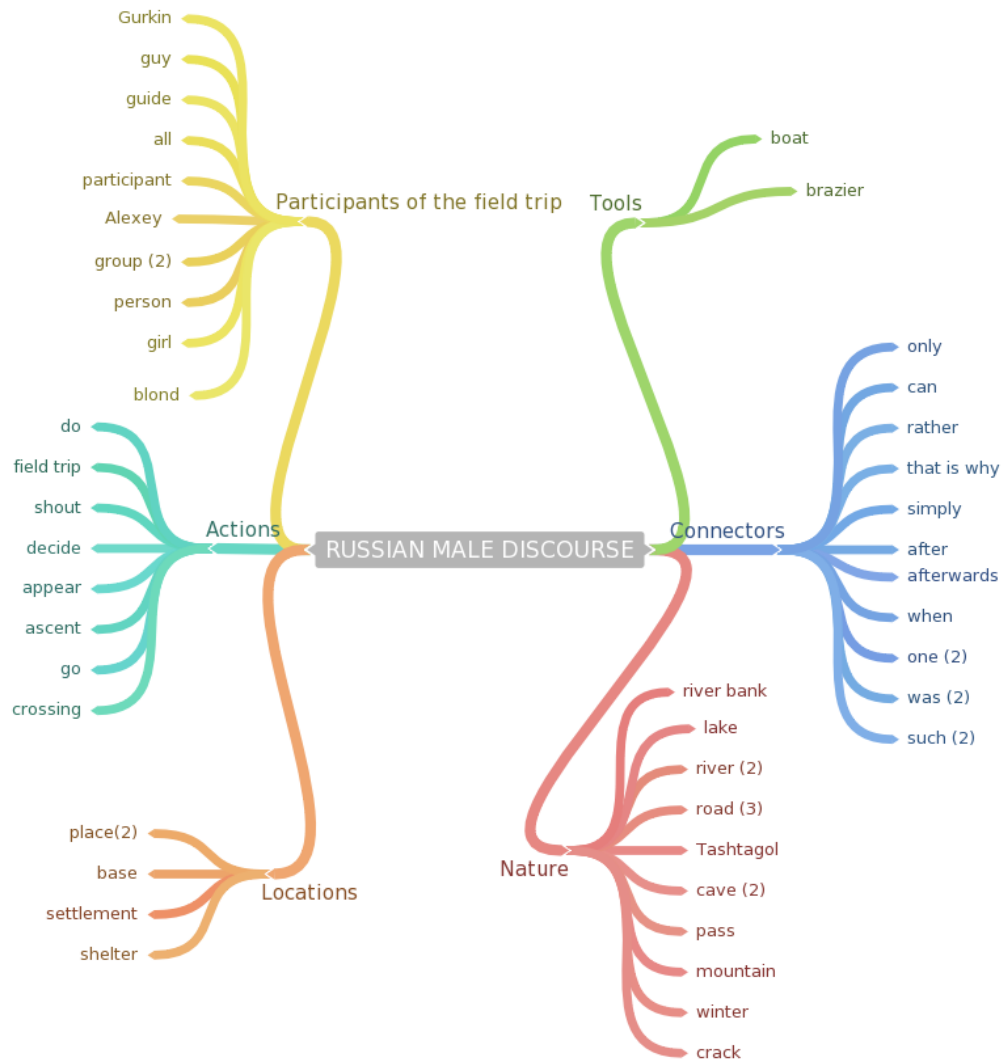
Figure 1. Semantic fields of Russian male discourse.

The second group (10 words, 2 of which are present in 2 texts and 1 in 3 utterances) is the one I called "*Nature*" because it consists of words denoting or describing natural objects. I made a differentiation between "*Nature*" and "*Locations*" to show how much attention Russian males pay to the nature itself when being outdoors. However, it would be possible to unite these 2 groups under the heading "Landscape".

The third most common semantic field is called "*The participants of the field trip*" (10 words, 1 of them repeated in 2 discourses) followed by

"*Actions*" – the group of words denoting the process of going on a trip, comprised mainly of verbs (8 units). The least common group is "*Tools*", i.e. objects used during the trip.

Another important feature of Russian male discourse is that its semantic core is mainly nominative (some of the translations are in Gerund, which would be a verb-form in English but this is a noun in Russian) and almost entirely denotative: words have only a direct meaning and lack any kind of emotional or evaluative connotation.

Taking all that into account, we might come to the following conclusions: Russian males

1. have a tendency to pay more attention to landscape (and in particular, natural landscape) than to the group they are in or to the process of being on the trip when they are outdoors;

2. are likely to be 'observers', i.e. 'what is out there' is more important for them than what they feel about that or how that influences them.

Russian Females

Now I will conduct the same procedure with Russian female discourse with the same criteria of selection and the same process of analysis.

Statistical Information

1. http://pohodnik.info/forum/index.php?topic=79.0

The amount of words: 3672

The semantic core:

1.	рюкзак	20	backpack
2.	потом	18	afterwards
3.	быть	17	be
4.	какой	16	some (such)
5.	деть	15	put
6.	здесь	15	here

7. который   13   which

8. лошадь   13   horse

9. далёкий   13   far away

2. http://pohodnik.info/forum/index.php?topic=871.0

The amount of words: 204

The semantic core:

1. инструктор   4   guide (leader)

2. один   3   one

3. Евгений   3   Evgeniy (the name of the guide)

4. сделать   3   do

5. было   3   was

6. программа   3   programme

7. маршрут   3   route

8. Игорь   3   Igor (the name of the guide)

3. http://caravan.hobby.ru/forumnew/index.php?s=6edbff8d561e4101e960f3 8e3d19d1f5&showtopic=4544

The amount of words: 2416

The semantic core:

1. был   29   was

2. через   18   through (via)

3. поехать   16   go

4. который   15   which

5. грунтовка   15   dirt road

6. поезд   14   train

7. Украина   12   Ukraine

8. один   12   one

4. http://caravan.hobby.ru/forumnew/index.php?s=6edbff8d561e4101e960f3 8e3d19d1f5&showtopic=4372

The amount of words: 2171

The semantic core:

1. быть   27   be

2. который   17   which

3. велосипед   13   bicycle

4. дорога   11   road

5. Надежда   10   Nadezhda (the name of the participant)

6. деревня   9   village

7. Саша   9   Sasha (the name of the participant)

8. свое   8   one's own

9. Волга   8   the Volga

5. http://www.skitalets.ru/trips/2011/ice_pogodina/

The amount of words: 483

The semantic core:

1. очень   11   very

2. было   8   was

3. ледник   8   glacier

4. льдинка   4   little piece of ice (positive connotation)

5. много   3   many

6. красивый   3   beautiful

7. большой   3   big

8. место   3   place

9. который   3   which

6. http://active44.ru/topic/1278-na-velosipedah-po-evrope/

The amount of words: 253

The semantic core:

1. Австрия   6   Austria

2. поход   5   trip

3. Чехия   4   The Czech Republic

4. Прага   4   Prague

5. красивый   4   beautiful

6. Дунай   4   the Danube

7. чешский   3   Czech

8. город   3   city

9. Вена   3   Vienna

10. вело-   3   cycling

7. http://egiki.ru/forum/viewtopic.php?f=88&t=4601

The amount of words: 7553

The semantic core:

1. перевал   117   pass (passage)
2. озеро   60   lake
3. тропа   53   path
4. участок   53   area
5. долина   52   valley
6. скальный   50   rocky
7. спуск   48   descent
8. курум   43   stone run
9. лес   39   forest

8. http://www.veloturist.ru/forum/index.php?topic=2151.0

The amount of words: 394

The semantic core:

1. очень   4   very
2. разный   4   different
3. один   3   one
4. первый   3   the first
5. самый   3   the most
6. город   3   city

9. http://www.otzyv.ru/read.php?id=91553

The amount of words: 1194

The semantic core:

1. поход   7   trip
2. инструктор   7   guide
3. рюкзак   7   backpack
4. Бахчисарай   6   Bakhchisaray (the name of the place)
5. Ольга   6   Olga (the name of the guide)
6. группа   6   group
7. бывать   6   visit
8. Крым   6   Crimea

10. http://archive.diary.ru/~kblkblk-ru/?comments&postid=33582783

The amount of words: 117

The semantic core:

1. поход   4   trip
2. быть   3   be
3. сходить   2   go
4. думать   2   think

Analysis

When categorising the semantic cores, I have singled out 7 semantic fields of Russian female discourse (see Figure 2).

The dominant group in Russian female discourse is "*Route*" (further subdivided into "*Nouns proper*" and "*Nouns common*") and gives factual information about the trip and, as derived from the title, the route. It consists of 16 different words, one of which appears in two different discourses.

The second largest group is "*Nature*" and is comprised of words denoting natural objects (12 units).

I gave the third largest semantic field the name "*Emotional-reflective words*" because these are the words used to describe the results of one's reflective thinking. It is the most subjective group of all. The words present in this group help the author express her opinion and emotions. The group consists of 9 units, 2 of which build the core of two different discourses.

The groups that follow are "*Connectors*" (8 units, 3 of which reoccur in multiple discourses), "*Actions*" (8 units), "*Participants of the trip*" (7 units), and "*Tools*" (3 units). The description of the words comprising these semantic fields has already been given (see "Russian male discourse").

Russian female discourse consists of all parts of speech with the dominance of proper nouns. However, it can also be said that almost all the groups of content words (nouns, verbs, adjectives with the exception of adverbs) are relatively equally present in Russian female discourse.
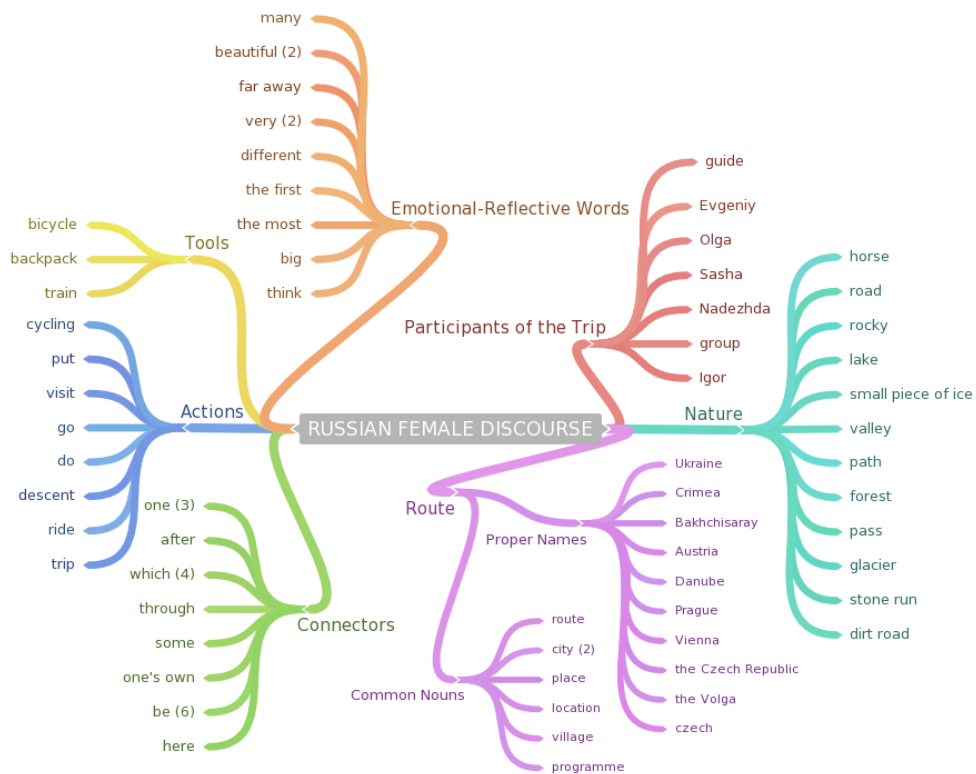
Figure 2. Semantic fields of Russian female discourse

Taking the above given analysis into consideration, we may conclude that Russian females:

1. during the trip, pay more attention to nature than to the people they are on a trip with or physical activity involved into the trip;

2. have the following hierarchy of things important to them during the trip: where – what is the nature like – what do I think/feel about it – what am I doing – who is there with me;

3. tend to be 'subjective observers', i.e. they value factual information and are attentive to the landscape they are in but they pay a lot of attention to the way the landscape resonates with them: thoughts, feelings, emotions.

British Discourse

Following the same procedure, I will now analyse the British discourse: first, males, then females. The criteria and the amount of texts remain the same.

British Males

Statistical Information

1. http://www.walkingforum.co.uk/index.php?topic=27173.0

The amount of words: 781

The semantic core:

1. cloud   9
2. weather   8
3. Fairfield   8
4. pike   8
5. Chris   7
6. round (n.)   6
7. down   6

2. http://www.walkingforum.co.uk/index.php?topic=27303.0

The amount of words: 148

The semantic core:

1. amazing   2
2. think   2
3. because   2
4. ridge   2
5. more   2

3. http://www.walkingforum.co.uk/index.php?topic=26462.0

The amount of words: 714

The semantic core:

1. were   11
2. they   11
3. snow   10
4. there   8

    5. crampons   7

    6. just   6

4. http://www.walkingforum.co.uk/index.php?topic=26374.0

The amount of words: 388

The semantic core:

    1. summit   4

    2. this   3

    3. some   3

    4. today   3

    5. Stob   3

    6. they   3

    7. that   3

5. http://www.walkingforum.co.uk/index.php?topic=27087.0

The amount of words: 88

The semantic core:

    1. route   2

    2. away   2

6. http://www.walkhighlands.co.uk/Forum/viewtopic.php?f=9&t=43133

The amount of words: 158

The semantic core:

    1. Aviemore   3

    2. walking   3

    3. walk   3

    4. transport   2

    5. from   2

    6. Kincraig   2

    7. Kingussie   2

    8. road   2

    9. much   2

    10. those   2

7. http://www.walkhighlands.co.uk/Forum/viewtopic.php?f=9&t=43075

The amount of words: 327

The semantic core:

1. rain — 4
2. back — 4
3. track — 3
4. waterproof — 3
5. down — 3
6. over — 3
7. here — 3

8. http://www.walkhighlands.co.uk/Forum/viewtopic.php?f=9&t=43038

The amount of words: 132

The semantic core:

1. with — 3
2. than — 3
3. long — 3
4. ridge — 2
5. route — 2
6. decided — 2
7. shock — 2

9. http://www.walkhighlands.co.uk/Forum/viewtopic.php?f=9&t=42862

The amount of words: 281

The semantic core:

1. Loch — 4
2. summit — 4
3. Corrour — 3
4. then — 3
5. down — 3
6. from — 3
7. stream — 3

10. http://www.walkhighlands.co.uk/Forum/viewtopic.php?f=9&t=42840

The amount of words: 773

The semantic core:

1. path — 9

2. were   9

3. that   8

4. then   7

5. good   5

6. Carn   5

7. boggy   5

8. wasn't   5

9. reached   5

Analysis

Having conducted the analysis of the semantic cores of British male discourse, I have singled out 7 semantic fields (see Figure 3), 2 words ('Chris', 'transport') remained unclassified.

The dominant group of British male discourse is "*Connectors*", consisting of 16 linguistic units, 4 of which are repeated in 2 different texts (the explanation of the content of groups, which is not provided here, to be found above in "Russian discourse").

The second largest semantic field is "*Route*", further subdivided into "*Nouns Proper*" (8 units) and "*Directions*" (7 units, 1 of which is repeated in 3 discourses and another one – in 2).

The third largest group is "*Emotional-reflective words*" (11 units), followed by "*Nature*" (5 words, 2 of which are repeated in 2 texts) and "*Actions*" (3 units).

Another group comprised of 3 words is "*Weather*": words denoting weather conditions.

The least common group (2 words) in the British male discourse is "*Gear*": the specific equipment use to conduct a certain activity.

It is also important to notice that all notional parts of speech except for adverbs are present in British male discourse with a slight abundance of nouns. The core of the discourse is not devoid of emotional or evaluative connotations.
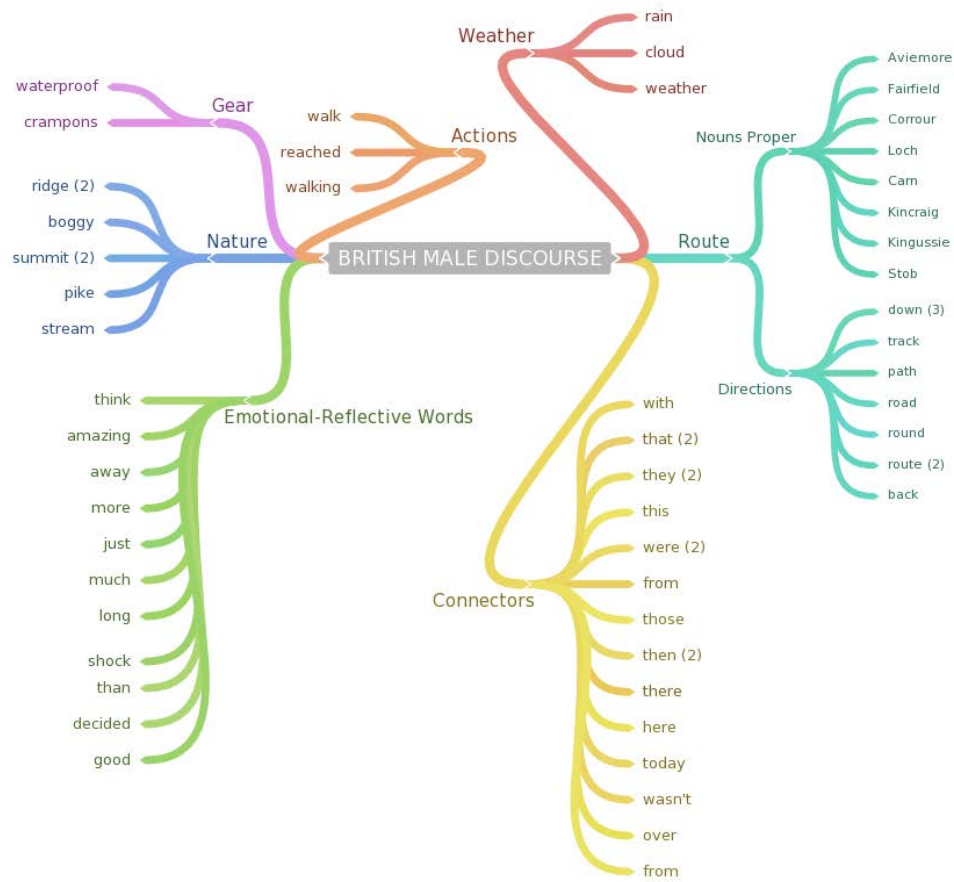
Figure 3. Semantic fields of British male discourse

Taking the above said into consideration, we therefore might assume that British males:

1. have a tendency to pay a lot of attention to the factual side of the trip, i.e. to be precise in narrating the route with the detailed description of the directions;

2. are likely to reflect a lot during the trip;

3. tend to focus more on how the landscape affects them rather than on the nature itself or the process of being on the way (physical aspect);

4. could be called 'subjective advice givers', i.e. the intention of writing a message on the Internet forum is to give their opinion on the trip (with the detailed explanation of how exactly the did that).

Statistical Information

1. http://www.walkingforum.co.uk/index.php?topic=27397.0

The amount of words: 85

The semantic core:

1. walk   2
2. crag   2

2. http://www.walkhighlands.co.uk/Forum/viewtopic.php?f=9&t=43106

The amount of words: 874

The semantic core:

1. that   16
2. have   8
3. there   7
4. hill   6
5. where   5
6. from   5
7. about   5
8. time   5
9. this   5
10. good   5

3. http://www.walkhighlands.co.uk/Forum/viewtopic.php?f=9&t=43042

The amount of words: 96

The semantic core:

1. through   3
2. steep   2
3. which   2
4. gorge   2
5. sides   2
6. some   2
7. walk   2

4. http://www.walkhighlands.co.uk/Forum/viewtopic.php?f=9&t=42610

The amount of words: 585

The semantic core:

1. rain   5
2. there   5
3. that   5
4. could   4
5. from   4
6. Beinn   4
7. down   4
8. back   4
9. this   4

5. http://www.walkhighlands.co.uk/Forum/viewtopic.php?f=25&t=35535

The amount of words: 2274

The semantic core:

1. with   19
2. that   16
3. path   16
4. tent   12
5. time   9
6. from   9
7. nice   8
8. then   8
9. what   8

6. http://www.ukseakayakguidebook.co.uk/short_articles/mckenna.htm

The amount of words: 664

The semantic core:

1. Mike   8
2. paddling   8
3. that   6
4. about   6
5. were   6
6. wind   5
7. with   5

8. trip   5

7.http://www.livefortheoutdoors.com/Community-Landing/Forum-Landing/Forum-Categories/Topic/?&topic-id=48095

The amount of words: 166

The semantic core:

1. Loch   6
2. Katrine   4
3. cycle   4
4. then   3
5. down   3
6. north   3

8.http://www.livefortheoutdoors.com/Community-Landing/Forum-Landing/Forum-Categories/Topic/?&topic-id=21356

The amount of words: 167

The semantic core:

1. walk   3
2. unrelenting   2
3. going   2
4. mountains   2
5. forests   2
6. through   2
7. Refugio   2
8. yesterday   2
9. mean   2

9. http://www.walkingforum.co.uk/index.php?topic=23527.0

The amount of words: 444

The semantic core:

1. there   6
2. that   5
3. about   4
4. around   4
5. walk   4

6. were   4

7. back   3

8. moor   3

9. once   3

10. http://www.walkingforum.co.uk/index.php?topic=14269.0

The amount of words: 187

The semantic core:

1. walk   3

2. Meldon   2   the name of the place

3. really   2

4. know   2

Analysis

Following the same procedure, I have single out 8 semantic fields in the British female discourse (see Figure 4). One word ('tent') remained unclassified.

The dominant group is "*Connectors*" (16 different linguistic units, 5 of which are repeated in 2 different discourses, 3 – in 3, and 1 – in half of the texts). The description of this semantic field as well as the others that have already been described can be found in the chapters above.

The second most common semantic field is "*Route*", consisting of "*Nouns Proper*" (4) and "*Directions*" (6 words, 2 of which are repeated in 2 texts).

The third group is "*Emotional-reflective words*" (7 words) followed by "*Nature*" (6 words) and "*Actions*" (4 words, 1 of which is repeated in 5 discourses).

The next semantic field is called "*Time*" and consists of the words giving time references (3 units).

The 2 smallest semantic fields are "*The participants of the trip*" and "*Weather*" and consist of 2 words each.

Figure 4. Semantic fields of British female discourse

Different parts of speech are present in the British female discourse and it is hard to single out the one that would be dominant. Some words (although rather few) possess emotional and/or evaluative connotations.

Taking all the above said into consideration, we might assume that, when being in the outdoors on a trip, British females:

1. tend to focus more on the formal part of the trip, i.e. directions and the course of the journey;

2. are likely to reflect a lot during and after the trip;

3. have a tendency to focus more on the visual information;

4. could be called "organised reflectors" because they balance the formal side of the trip with the subjective, emotional-reflective part.

Gender Differences in Perceiving the Outdoors

Russian Discourse

As we can see from Figure 1 and Figure 2, the most vivid difference in Russian male and female discourse is the fact that Russian females unlike males are using emotional-reflective words, such as '*beautiful*', '*very*', '*many*', etc. Furthermore, they use words with strong emotional and/or evaluative connotations, e.g. Russian «*льдинка*», which can roughly be translated as 'a small piece of ice'. The word possesses a diminutive suffix in Russian, which most always results in a positive emotional connotation, as in this case as well.

The second major difference I have found is that the male discourse is very nominative (there are many more nouns in Russian male discourse than in the female one).

On the other hand, the third difference is that Russian females use a plethora of proper nouns, i.e. names of people and geographic objects, while males resort to common and quite often very concrete nouns, such as '*settlement*', '*cave*', and '*participant*'.

The length of the messages Russian males and females leave on Internet forums is also different. So, in the sampled material, the average length of Russian male discourse is 820.4 words, whilst the average length of Russian female discourse is 1845.7 words, which is a very significant difference. This can be explained by the fact that Russian females tend to write longer sentences and be more precise and very detailed when narrating about their trips.

The interesting thing about all the above mentioned differences is that they are typical not only of discourse devoted to being in the outdoors. These are general differences officially recognized in the Russian discourse by gender and social linguists (see, for example, Белянин, 2004, p. 201-203). This proves that the current research is accurate, valid and does not contradict with the existing paradigm of gender differences in the Russian discourse. We hereby might conclude that general gender differences govern Russian written discourse regardless of the topic. Therefore, we

might as well ascribe all the above mentioned differences to the peculiarities of Russian discourse, which are not that relevant for the current research. I will come back to them when analysing cross-cultural differences. However, these differences do not show us dissimilarities in perceiving the outdoors. They reflect differences in narrating about the experience. So, now, I will come to less evident but more relevant dissimilarities in the sematic fields.

The most obvious difference here is that Russian female discourse has a semantic field called "Route" unlike the male one. Moreover, it is the dominant group in the female discourse. This leads me to the idea that the trips of Russian females tend to be more planned rather precisely and in advance. It is very important for girls and women to know their place, i.e. where exactly they are, how they got there and how they are going to continue the trip. The route itself as well as the process of choosing a way itself is a highly valued part of the trip. Russian males, on the other hand, tend to be more spontaneous in choosing their route and less precise in describing it. The fact that they have crossed the river and ascended the mountain is more important for them than the names of this or that natural object.

Both gender discourses have a semantic field of nature consisting of roughly the same amount of words (males have 2 words less but their discourse is shorter in general). Nevertheless, there are certain differences present here as well. If we look closely at the units comprising the semantic core, we can notice that they are different. The semantic discourse has words like '*lake*', '*river*', and '*cave*', which are rather noticeable parts of a landscape. We can say that these objects determine the natural landscape. Russian females, in their turn, mention such objects as '*rocky*', '*dirt road*', and '*horse*' alongside with the ones mentioned by men. From all that, I would draw a conclusion that Russian females tend to be more attentive to the landscape they are in while being on the way. They make an extra effort of noticing details.

British discourse

If we consider the British discourse (see Figure 3 and 4), the first gender difference that is noticeable is the intention of the person writing a message on the Internet forum. This difference cannot be deduced directly from the diagrams though. British females seem to be narrating about their trip in order to share what they have experienced (seen, felt, etc.). British males, on the other hand, are most likely to be giving advice to other people, i.e. they do share their personal experience but they emphasize whether or not the route is worth or not worth being repeated by somebody else; and if yes, then how one can go on the exact same journey. I guess then that main gender difference here would be the intention of the trip itself. My assumption is that females go on a trip to get some new experiences, whereas men, apart from that, need to be 'explorers' and want to gain certain reputation among the others.

Another gender difference lies in the way of narrating. British females narrate about the trip as something wholesome; it is more a descriptive story, where all the parts of the journey are equal. British males write something close to a story, i.e. their discourse has an introduction, a development, a culmination, and a resolution. If the message is devoted to hiking, the fact that they have reached the top of the hill (or the mountain) is emphasised a lot. It is not a narration about a trip; it is a story of how they reached the summit. Words like '*summit*', '*pike*', and '*up*' are used very frequently in the British male discourse. It looks like British males unlike females do not go outdoors to experience and embody nature; they want to conquer it, which brings us back to the first point of discussion again.

Adding to that is the fact that British males almost never mention their companions, although they have very often had one (or more). There exists an illusion of a solo-journey. This contributes to the idea of conquering nature and being tough outdoors. This seems to be typical of some women, too, but could not be called a mainstream tendency.

A peculiarity of British female discourse is the fact that they are the only ones speaking about time or even just mentioning it. Time appears to

be a very important dimension of their journey. Not just what and where but also when and for how long. I am not quite sure how to interpret this fact but my assumption is that they, unlike all the rest, see a trip as part of their everyday life, whilst the rest have an ordinary life and go on a trip, like in two parallel realities. This would mean that British females do not see a natural landscape as something foreign or unusual, which would make them more comfortable in the landscape; they would embody it and experience it integrating it into the reality of their life.

The difference in the length of sampled texts is not that obvious in the British discourse as it was in the Russian one. Nevertheless, it exists. The average length of the text produced by a British male is 379 words, whereas for women the number is 554, 2 words. It is not very significant and can be explained by the fact that women are using more functional words (conjunctions, etc.). It makes a difference in the language they are using but not in the experience they are getting.

Gender Differences in the Cross-Cultural Dimension

Now that we have analysed gender differences in the British and Russian discourses, the question arises as whether or not we might speak of the universality of gender differences (at least on the cross-cultural level of the two countries). Are there any differences in perceiving the outdoors that are imposed on us by the nature itself?

Astonishingly, there are no cross-cultural gender differences in perceiving the outdoors and the landscape. This means that although we may speak about gender differences in experiencing being in the outdoors, they are culture bound. So, we have just proven that gender is an absolutely social construct. Our society predetermines certain reactions by imposing its expectations on us.

It is also worth mentioning that there are more gender differences in the Russian discourse and they are more obvious. For example, once I have mistakenly started analysing a text assuming that it was written by a female (the photo and the name of the author were clearly hinting at it). However, when I got the statistical data, I was very surprised because it matched male

discourse much better. Then I started reading the message and the first sentence was, 'I want to share my experience with you. I am writing from my wife's account'. So, even without reading the text but only having seen its semantic core I managed to realize my mistake.

Another difference is nicknames and profile pictures of Russians and British Internet users. The majority of Russians (and here I speak of hundreds of them, not only the ten I have sampled for the analysis, but also all the rest whose texts did not correspond to my sampling criteria) use their own names as nicknames and photos of them as profile pictures. Moreover, websites contain public information about their gender. It was very easy to find out the gender of the author.

In the British discourse, on the other hand, it was extremely difficult. It probably was the major difference I have faced when carrying out the empirical research study. Not only do the British prefer random pictures (of plants, animals, etc.) as their profile pictures, but they also tend to choose very neutral nicknames that could be both male and female like '*U059361*', '*ccmcm34*', or '*made in Scotland*'. Moreover, the information about the gender of the participant of the Internet community cannot be found on its website.

I assume that this explains why gender differences are more vivid in the Russian language. It is seen normal to act according to your gender and to be seen in the frame of your gender. People have no intention of hiding it. In the British community gender does not seem to have such an importance. You are talking to a person without knowing whether it is a boy or a girl, a man or a woman. I also need to admit that Russia is rather hostile to people changing gender or to sexual minorities, while Britain is not. This is why, to my mind, gender differences in the British discourse are present but rather minor.

So, we have come to the conclusion that gender is a social construct influenced by some culture. I believe we can further trace it back to language. Unlike English, the Russian language has a category of grammatical gender. It means that nouns are divided into 3 genders

(feminine, masculine, and neutral); verbs and adjectives get different inflections when used with nouns of different genders. Most importantly, when used in the past tense, verbs acquire different endings even following the pronouns. As almost all the texts devoted to previous experiences are written in the past tense, the reader immediately knows the gender of the narrator. For example, an English sentence "I have just come back from the trip" has two translations into the Russian language according to the gender of the person saying it:

1. male – Я только что вернулся [virn´ulsia] из похода;
2. female – Я только что вернулась [virn´ulas'] из похода.

My assumption, therefore, is that languages having the category of grammatical gender are more likely to have gender differences on the semantic level (including gender differences in perceiving the outdoors). However, further research is required to prove or disprove my hypothesis.

Cultural Differences in Perceiving the Outdoors.
Their Implications for Outdoor Guides

As described above, gender differences in Russian and British discourse narrating about one's experience of going on a journey are culture bound. Therefore, now I would like to speak about cultural differences in experiencing a landscape. Are there any repeated patterns that would indicate that culture and mentality influence one's being in the outdoors? To find an answer to that question, we will need to come back to Figures 1-4 and look for similarities within Russian and British discourses that would at the same time distinguish one from another.

The main question I want to find an answer to is the focus of narration, i.e. what is more important for people when they are in the outdoors: nature, people they are with, or they themselves. Another important issue would be minor focuses, i.e. what people pay attention to when being on a trip. To make the comparison easier, I will first make a table indicating what the focuses for Russians and British are, the numbers showing the rate of importance (from 1 to 8, 1 being the most important; '-' meaning 'not present'). I have also highlighted the lines reflecting cultural differences (see Table 1, next page). To determine that, I have calculated the average for each focus for either culture giving the value of 9 to the ones that are absent. If the difference was equal to or exceeded 2 points, I have regarded that as a significant difference. If a focus is present only in one of the four columns, I have considered it a unique feature that is both culture and gender bound and will not analyse it here. If a difference within a discourse exceeded 5 points, I have also excluded it from the comparison because it means that the focus is not culture-bound.

	Russian Males	Russian Females	British Males	British Females
Connectors	1	4	1	1
Nature	2	2	4	4
Participants of the Trip	3	6	-	7
Actions	4	5	5	5
Locations	5	-	-	-
Tools[1]	6	7	-	-
Route	-	1	2	2
Emotional-Reflective Words	-	3	3	3
Weather	-	-	6	8
Gear	-	-	7	-
Time	-	-	-	6

Table 1. Focuses of Narration

Having done all that, I have singled out 3 cultural differences in perceiving the outdoors. The first and most important is the major focus. According to my research, landscape, and natural landscape in particular,

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[1]I have differentiated between "Tools" and "Gear" in the initial analysis because it looked more appropriate there. However, these semantic groups are very close and in the cross-cultural comparison I would not differentiate between them. In this case, there would be no big and relevant cultural differences in this area.

are of primary importance to Russians and of secondary importance to the British people, who tend to put a major emphasis on their personality: how does being in this landscape affect me, what do I feel, what do I think.

We as outdoor guides need to keep that in mind working with groups representing different cultures. What do we want to achieve when taking the group on a trip? Do we want to facilitate their personal development? That seems to be the best-case scenario with the British groups but needs extra facilitation with the Russians. It could probably be emphasized before the trip that they need to observe their own feelings and reactions, artificially changing their focus. On the other hand, if a trip is a field trip and is supposed to provide some knowledge about the landscape, if participants are expected to observe more rather than to reflect, that should probably be additionally explained to the British group, so that they know they have to shift their focus.

The second big difference is paying attention to other participants. They seem to mean more to Russians than to the British, as if Russians are aiming at getting common experience, whilst the British want to get personal experience even when go on a trip as a group. This implies that extra effort (e.g. games) should be made by an outdoor guide working with British groups if one of his/her aims is to unite the group, i.e. to do team-building. On the other hand, if the purpose is to facilitate personal development, time for solo-journeys should be thought of and provided for Russians.

The next and the last difference is the attitude to the weather. I do not think that it needs to be kept in mind by outdoor facilitators but it is still worth analysing as it is quite a fascinating cultural marker. According to my research, weather is an irrelevant factor for Russians, although it is present in both British male and female discourses. I assume that the big difference here is in being in the landscape and seeing it. And speaking of Russians I can be rather certain because of my cultural background. When Russians go on a trip, they understand they encounter nature. By the way, instead of saying 'outdoors' Russians use the word 'in/to/etc. the nature'. Hence, when

Russians decide to go on a journey, they know that the weather may be different and that it is also part of nature. They do not care much about waterproof clothes or expensive protective gear. Getting wet in the rain in the forest is also seen as an adventure. Russians want to mingle with nature, to be closer to it. Modern gear is something people do not use (I am not speaking of sportsmen here or of people doing sports that require certain gear). British people, on the other hand (and here I have made personal observations as well), think about the weather when going outdoors. Waterproof hiking boots, trousers, and jackets are widely used and seen very appropriate. People dress according to the weather. And even if it is not raining in the morning, it is regarded advisable to take a rain jacket with you as it may rain later. As a person, I do not understand that and see it as separation from nature and liming one's experience of being in the outdoors. As a researcher, I cannot make any claims because cultures and mentalities are not the same and opinions on the issue may differ. There are no indicators as how to interpret this cultural difference but it could be an interesting topic for further research and discussion.

Conclusion

This research study has provided a baseline understanding of the cultural and gender difference Russians and the British have when perceiving the outdoors and experiencing landscapes. The research has been governed by the idea that culture, mentality, language, and landscape are interrelated, interconnected and affect one another, implying that through the investigation of one, one could also draw conclusions about the other.

The research has been carried out using the hermeneutics, the triangulation, and the latent semantic analysis methods within the critical discourse analysis approach. The research study has shown that there are gender differences in experiencing outdoor recreational activities in both Russian and British discourses. However, they are culture-bound and do not provide ground for claiming cross-cultural gender differences. Gender differences are more abundant in the Russian discourse, which could be explained by differences in mentality or even in the languages people are speaking. Cultural differences are also present and they are connected with the focus of attention people have when going on a trip or a journey.

This research paper aims to prove that when borrowing practices from other countries, outdoor guides need to adjust them according to the peculiarities of a particular nation, culture, or even gender, which may be the case in certain cultures. It has often been assumed that people share common nature; therefore, outdoor practices can be transferrable. However, the research has shown that such a point of view is erroneous and certain adjustments need to be done for the activity to be more beneficial in this or that context, and in the cross-cultural dimension in particular.

However, it is important to remember that the current thesis is relying on a research study, which has been based on a limited number of samples from only two cultural backgrounds. To see, how big cultural differences really are and whether or not gender differences should be a big issue, further multidimensional research is required, such as an in-depth analysis of a particular culture, a cross-cultural comparison or gender study

of other cultures, or a quantitative research of the same cultures that would add to the existing research outcomes broadening the scope and of the study.

This research is pioneer to the area of outdoor practices due to the fact that it investigates the Russian perspective alongside with the British one, which has never been done before since outdoor education has not been introduced to Russian yet. The research method of latent semantic analysis also belongs to a different branch of knowledge and has never been used for the analysis of experiencing landscapes. Therefore, the results gathered throughout the study are new to the academia and are hoped to inspire further research in this area.

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