FATHER-CHILD DISCOURSE IN FAMILY GUY:
A CORPUS-BASED ANALYSIS

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The article aims at analysis of gender and family stereotypes in father-child communication in an animated series *Family Guy*, featuring a typical American family. The study focuses on Peter Griffin's discourse, the father of the family, containing his communication with two of his teenage children, a son and a daughter, unveiling gender peculiarities in father-son and father-daughter discourses. The attempt is made to disclose how gender and family roles are verbalized in communication between family members. The conversation, discourse and corpus-based analyses have been used to analyze the main character's discourse in order to single out the father's specific vocabulary — through word lists, keyword lists, clusters and collocations — he uses while communicating with his son and daughter. The findings show that Peter Griffin chooses different language means while talking to his son and daughter. Thus, his discourse addressing his adolescent son Chris is rich in direct addresses, mainly commands when the father tries to discipline his son. Offering his son emotional support or encouragement the father stays forthright with him creating an image of "real men" stereotypical conversations. On the contrary, while communicating with his daughter Peter modifies her name Meg addressing her as *honey*, *sweetheart*, *one-of-a-kind* in father-daughter discourse. However, using diminutives he humiliates his daughter and makes her feel an abandoned child. In this way, he makes her feel special but in a negative way. Family communication created in the animated series reflects gender stereotypes in father's attitude to his children belonging to two different sexes. Nevertheless, this verbal tendency does not affect relationships within the family. For the future, it is worthwhile to compile a larger corpus including mother-child, child-father, and child-mother discourses to get more representative results.

Keywords: corpus-based analysis; father-child discourse; animated series; gender stereotypes; family stereotypes.

Animated sitcoms have gained vast popularity on TV. Conveying social issues with a touch of humour and exploring them through a wildly inventive lens, they reflect common social values. Corpus of animated sitcoms' scripts enables quantitative as well as qualitative analyses of characters' speech that could be used to reveal the values of a typical American family.

As the research aims to distinguish gender communication peculiarities in father-child discourse in *Family Guy*, the following steps are needed:

– to create a corpus of father's remarks to children;

– to compare the way he addresses his daughter and son by means of word lists, keyword lists, clusters and collocations;

– to analyse the results in regard to gender and family roles.

R. Quirk (1960), J. Sinclair (1991), G. N. Leech (1992), M. Stubbs (1995), T. McEnery (2012), E. Tognini-Bonelli, S. Hunston (2002), V. Viana (2011) have contributed to corpus linguistics as a method of carrying out linguistic analysis. P. Baker (2013) and O. Tkachyk (2018) have used corpus analysis to aid gender and language research. I. Bestiuk (2011) and N. Bucholts (2016) have analysed idiolect of characters in American cartoons. However, an in-depth analysis of the animated series' corpus with the aim of focussing on gendered use of language has not been carried out yet.

Corpus linguistics is 'the study of language based on examples of real-life language use' (McEnery, 2001, p. 1). Thus, a corpus is a collection of naturally occurring words in a computer-readable form. Currently, there is a lack of consensus on whether corpus linguistics is a theory of language or a methodology. According to T. McEnery and A. Wilson it 'is a methodology rather than an aspect of language requiring explanation or description' (2001, p. 2). G. Leech as one of the pioneers of corpus linguistics regards it 'as a new philosophical approach to the study of language… an 'open sesame' to a new way of thinking about language' (1992, p. 106). E. Tognini-Bonelli, on the contrary, claims that 'corpus linguistics has a theoretical status' (2001, p. 1). S. Kübler and H. Zinsmeister conclude that 'the answer to the question whether corpus linguistics is a theory or a

tool is simply that it can be both. It depends on how corpus linguistics is applied' (2015, p. 14). In our case, we use corpus linguistics as a research tool.

For this purpose, the corpus of *Family Guy* scripts was compiled. It is an American animated sitcom television series that focuses on the Griffins, an average American family living in the small fictional town of Quahog in Rhode Island. The animated series was created by Seth MacFarlane for the Fox Broadcasting Company. The material of the research was compiled from 7 episodes aired in 1998–2005.

The family consists of the father of the family Peter Griffin, who is shown to be a man with low intellect and who constantly engages in all sorts of adventures, his aristocratic wife Lois, who despite her husband's antics, remains faithful to him, as well as three children. Their daughter Meg is a notorious teenager and is constantly bullied by her peers. An obese son Chris is very similar to his father, equally mentally retarded, and capable of committing absurd things. The youngest member of the family Stewie is a phenomenally gifted toddler obsessed with the idea of world domination.

However, being named *Family Guy* this animated series has nothing in common with traditional family values. The creator, Seth MacFarlane, made an attempt to make fun of such topical issues in society as racism, obesity, religion, homosexuality, bullying. The family members were created after family archetypes but their behaviour breaks traditional family and gender stereotypes. The breadwinning father Peter is portrayed as an idle, uneducated, blue-collar working man that spends the majority of his time drinking beer with his friends instead of focusing on his children's needs. At the same time, the mother Lois is believed to raise children and maintain the household fitting a stay-at-home mother archetype. In fact, she does not set a good example for her children because she used to lead a dissipated life in her youth. Children in this family do not get enough attention and care from their parents. The father is interested in meaningless activities while the mother demonstrates lustfulness.

For this reason, Meg and Chris face teenage problems on their own. Meg strives nothing more than to be liked by the popular crowd at high school but ends up being forgotten by everyone including her family. In the same way as his peers, Chris deals with the problems that most pubescent boys face: acne, girls, and school. They fit an abandoned child archetype and embody typical stereotypes about teenagers.

The way the father talks to his children shall be considered. The current interest lies in the word list of Peter's remarks to his son Chris that shows the most frequent words used by the father (see Fig. 1 below). The figure shows that functional words and pronouns constitute the bulk of this corpus; at the same time, frequent use of his son's name allows us to suppose that Peter addresses his son mainly by his first name and personal pronoun *you*.

Rank	Freq	Word
1	93	the
2	79	you
3	63	to
4	51	a
5	46	of
6	43	your
7	38	i
8	37	chris,
9	30	and
10	27	chris.
11	26	this
12	25	for

Figure 1. Peter-Chris word list

The following examples point out that the father uses his son's name to cheer Chris up and support him. From this point of view, it is regarded as the fact that diminutives are scarcely used in man-man conversation even when they share positive emotions.

*Now, now, **Chris**, now let's not panic. We can manage just fine without TV.* (season 1, episode 2).
*Don't you worry, **Chris**. I'll get you back in!*
*I probably don't say this often enough. But I'm really proud of you, **Chris**.* (season 1, episode 6)

Our suggestion is confirmed by the keyword list (see fig. 2) that shows unusually frequent and infrequent words in the target corpus in comparison with a reference corpus that is the Brown Corpus in our case. The salient words of our concern are *Chris* and *son*. It points out that Peter addresses his son directly emphasizing family roles.

Rank	Freq	Keyness	Keyword
1	37	359.979	chris,
2	27	262.687	chris.
3	20	194.583	don't
4	19	184.854	now,
5	16	155.667	that's
6	16	155.667	well,
7	43	151.731	your
8	14	136.208	oh,
9	13	126.479	gonna
10	13	126.479	i'm
11	13	126.479	we're
12	12	116.750	let's
13	12	116.750	son.

Figure 2. Peter-Chris keyword list

Consider the following example: *Don't take 'no' for an answer, Chris. You're **a Griffin**. And a Griffin never knows when to stop.* (season 1, episode 6). Referring to Chris as *a Griffin* Peter emphasises the fact that they have common roots and makes his son believe they are one unity. In this connection it should be noted that Peter uses *son* when he puts

stress on family issues: *That's more like it, **son**. Now, today we're gonna learn about the Griffin family history… Way to go, **son**! Hey, look. Here's a picture of your great-great-granddad, Osias Griffin* (season 3, episode 14).

This can be expanded to cluster analysis (see fig. 3). Sequence of words containing *Chris* shows that his name is mainly used in imperative and negative imperative sentences:

*Don't listen to him, **Chris**!*
***Chris**, don't listen to your sister!* (season 2, episode 17).
***Chris**, go burn all Meg's old pictures* (season 4, episode 4).

Rank	Freq	Range	Cluster
1	3	1	chris, don't
2	3	1	chris, feel
3	3	1	chris, go
4	3	1	chris, i
5	3	1	chris, i'm
6	3	1	chris, it's
7	3	1	chris, now
8	3	1	chris, sometimes
9	6	1	chris, this
10	3	1	chris, we're

Figure 3. Clusters with *Chris* in Peter-Chris subcorpus

One more point to be made here is the collocations of *Chris* set at 5 words on the left and 5 words on the right (see fig. 4). One can notice that Peter talks to him in regard to his sister revealing strong family orientation. Moreover, the word *machine* reveals a shared interest of the father and his son, whereas *boy* emphasizes gender roles.

Rank	Freq	Freq(L)	Freq(R)	Stat	Collocate
1	3	0	3	5.99634	sister,
2	3	0	3	5.99634	machine
3	3	0	3	5.99634	fun.
4	3	0	3	5.99634	boy,
5	3	0	3	5.58130	stand
6	3	0	3	4.99634	old
7	3	0	3	4.99634	day
8	3	0	3	4.58130	about
9	3	0	3	3.18898	we
10	3	0	3	1.99634	a

Figure 4. Collocations of Chris in Peter-Chris subcorpus

In conversation with his daughter Meg, Peter is more inclined to use the personal pronoun *you*. In Peter-Meg wordlist (see fig. 5) it is more frequent than the definite article that usually takes the first place in any corpus. By this, we imply that a father-daughter relationship in this family is closer and more personal than a father-son one. At the same time, the daughter's name *Meg* also predominates in the word list.

Rank	Freq	Word
1	198	you
2	180	the
3	108	meg,
4	108	to
5	102	a
6	102	i
7	72	of
8	60	oh,
9	60	your
10	54	for
11	54	just
12	54	with

Figure 5. Peter-Meg wordlist

Nevertheless, the closer father-daughter relationship does not mean it is warmer than the father-son one. When the father talks to his daughter he uses diminutives but it is only a formal feature. In fact, Peter does not care about Meg. Consider this example: *Oh, sorry, Meg. **Daddy** loves you. But Daddy also loves Star Trek. And, in all fairness, Star Trek was here first (season 1, episode 2).* The father often makes his daughter feel ashamed abusing her physically and verbally: *Hey, Meg, you mind cleaning out the shower next time you shave your legs? It's like a carpet in there* (season 1, episode 2). Even when Peter refers to Meg as *honey*, he does not try to be a better father: *Now, Meg, **honey**, I know what I did was wrong, and I know it's not the first time I've embarrassed you* (season 1, episode 2). Peter admits his mistake but he emphasizes the fact that he constantly causes confusion and shame to his daughter.

This brings us to concordance lines with *Meg* (see fig. 6). In lines 1, 5 and 6 *Meg* comes together with *honey* that occurs to be a significant collocation in this subcorpus. In line 12 *Meg* comes close to an adjective *one-of-a-kind* that her father uses to emphasize her uniqueness caring for his daughter's identity formation.

Hit	KWIC	File
1	n are messing with the dial. Uh, Meg, honey, can you pass the fir	Pet
2	airness, Star Trek was here first. Meg, don't believe what they're	Pet
3	This is taking forever! Come on, Meg, let's go. Fox is running one	Pet
4	: "Fast Animals, Slow Children." Meg, are you implying that Rosi	Pet
5	ing of my show. Hey, there it is. Meg, honey, are you okay? Liste	Pet
6	rone else wants you to be. Now, Meg, honey, I know what I did w	Pet
7	ime I've embarrassed you. Hey, Meg, you mind cleaning out the	Pet
8	e some Jewish guy a great wife. Meg, it's not exactly taking the b	Pet
9	you go around telling everyone. Meg, what are you doing at Wes	Pet
10	u wrecked the cable transmitter. Meg, there'll be plenty of time to	Pet
11	n the jewels with the salad fork. Meg, you're home late. Well, dor	Pet
12	y. Do I know that feeling. Listen. Meg, you're a one-of-a-kind girl	Pet
13	then. Have fun, sweetheart. Oh, Meg, there you are. Meg, your m	Pet
14	etheart. Oh, Meg, there you are. Meg, your mother wants the fan	Pet

Figure 6. Concordance lines with *Meg* in Peter-Meg subcorpus

Also, we find *sweetheart* on the left of *Meg* in line 13. It follows that Peter has a warm relationship with his daughter that is expressed in the way he softens his language to sound empathetic. In contrast to Peter-Chris corpus, there are no such words. In spite of this, Meg is perhaps the most humiliated character in *Family Guy*. She is constantly bullied by her family, especially by her father but it is mostly expressed nonverbally.

Thus, gender and family stereotypes influence our language irrespective of our intentions. The father in *Family Guy* alters his vocabulary depending on the person he talks to. Using imperatives and direct address in his remarks to his son, Peter demonstrates a strict father model while being gentle with his daughter for the reason that he chooses words with positive and neutral semantic prosody while referring to her. Nonetheless this word choice does not influence relationships. As it has been pointed out, the father uses diminutives in father-daughter communication in order to soften his harsh words but it does not alter an overall meaning of the utterance.

However, a larger corpus will give more information about tendencies in father-daughter and father-son communication and vice versa. Further studies may also look at the way a mother and her children communicate with each other being influenced by gender and family stereotypes.

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ДИСКУРС БАТЬКО-ДИТИНА В АНІМАЦІЙНОМУ СЕРІАЛІ «FAMILY GUY»: КОРПУСНИЙ АНАЛІЗ

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Стаття присвячена дослідженню гендерних та сімейних стереотипів у спілкуванні батько-дитина в анімаційному серіалі «Family Guy» про типову американську родину. Предметом дослідження є дискурс Пітера Ґріффіна, батька родини, що містить його спілкування з двома дітьми-підлітками, сином та донькою, та розкриває гендерні особливості дискурсів батько-син та батько-дочка. Актуальність дослідження обумовлена відсутністю корпусного аналізу дискурсу персонажів анімаційних серіалів, що представляють соціальні та гендерні стереотипи. Мета дослідження — розкрити, як гендер та сімейні ролі вербалізуються у спілкуванні між членами сім'ї. Були використані конверсаційний, дискурс та корпусний аналізи для вивчення дискурсу головного героя через списки найчастіше вживаних слів, списки ключових слів, кластери та словосполучення, щоб виділити специфічну лексику батька, яку він використовує в спілкуванні з сином та дочкою. Результати дослідження показують, що Пітер Ґріффін обирає різні мовні засоби залежно від того, чи він спілкується з сином, чи донькою. Таким чином, його дискурс, що стосується сина-підлітка Кріса, наповнений прямими звертаннями, здебільшого наказовими реченнями, які батько використовує, коли намагається дисциплінувати свого сина. Пропонуючи синові емоційну підтримку чи заохочення, батько залишається прямим з ним, створюючи образ стереотипних розмов «справжніх чоловіків». І навпаки, в звертаннях до доньки Мег батько використовує пестливі *honey*, *sweetheart*, *one-of-a-kind*. Однак, використовуючи пестливі форми, він принижує свою доньку і робить так, щоб вона відчувала себе покинутою дитиною. Таким чином він змушує її відчувати себе особливою, але в негативному сенсі. Сімейне спілкування, створене в мультсеріалі, відображає гендерні стереотипи у ставленні батька до своїх дітей різних статей. Тим не менш, ця мовна тенденція не впливає на стосунки в сім'ї. Перспективи подальших досліджень бачимо в складанні більшого корпусу, включаючи дискурси мати-дитина, дитина-батько, дитина-мати, для отримання більш репрезентативних результатів.

Ключові слова: корпусний аналіз; дискурс батько-дитина; анімаційний серіал; гендерні стереотипи; сімейні стереотипи.