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INTERRALATIONS OF LANGUAGE AND CULTURE

У статті розкривається сутність поняття культури, взаємозв'язок між мовою та культурою та її роль у міжкультурній комунікації. Особливої уваги заслуговують проблеми культурного шоку та культурних відмінностей, які можуть бути серйозним бар'єром у міжкультурній комунікації. У статті підкреслюється, що усвідомлення культурних відмінностей – дуже важлива умова успішної міжкультурної комунікації.

Ключові слова: високо та низько контекстуальні культури, глибока та поверхнева культура, етноцентризм, культура, культурний код нації, культура з високим/низьким рівнем комунікативної активності, культурний шок, ментальне програмування, міжкультурна свідомість.

The article deals with the essence of the notion of culture, interconnection of culture and language and the role it plays in the process of communication. The problems of culture shock and cultural differences, which may become a serious barrier in the cross-cultural communication, are given special attention. In the article it is emphasized that cross-cultural awareness is a very important condition of a successful communication.

Key words: cross-cultural awareness, culture, culture shock, deep culture and surface culture, ethnocentrism, high-involvement and high-considerateness cultures, high- and low-context cultures, mental programming, nation's cultural code.

The **object** of this article is cross-cultural communicative behavior. The **subject** of investigation is the cross-cultural differences. The **aim** of the article is to analyze the modern notion of culture and to find the peculiarities of culture and language interconnections. To reveal the theme and achieve the aim set in the article the following **tasks** were solved: 1) to regard the notion "culture" in the modern linguistics from different perspectives (its original meaning; from the point of view of cognitive anthropology and social linguistics); 2) to investigate the connection between language and culture and the influence of culture on people's speech behaviour; 3) to find out the role of an individual in the language and culture coexistence; 4) to consider the regulatory role of culture in the process of communication; 5) to regard the reasons and consequences of intercultural encounters; 6) to regard the peculiarities of communicative behaviour patterns representing different types of culture; 7) to dwell on ethnocentrism as a barrier in cross-cultural communication.

The topicality of the article. Cross-cultural communication is an integral part of human's activity in the contemporary world, that's why the awareness of cultural peculiarities and differences in communicative behaviour is an important component of learning and teaching the language.

When references are made to the word “culture”, in our opinion, arts and civilization are usually first things that spring to our mind. Originally, culture meant the purposeful influence of a man on nature, change of it in his interests. Later on culture was regarded as everything that appeared by means of man’s activity [3, p. 12].

In cognitive anthropology culture is a special way of cognition and structuring the world [3, p. 8]. It can be characterized as a dynamic, creative, and continuous process that includes unconscious or conscious patterns of behavior which reflect the societal beliefs and values shared by the people who are members of the group [10, p. 18].

It is a hereditary memory of a community and a body of knowledge which regulates the standards of perceiving, believing, evaluating and acting, and which is taken for granted when dealing with one another [3, p. 17]. In a nutshell “culture” can be regarded as the learned behavior patterns and attitudes of people in their societies.

Thus, our verbal and non-verbal behavior is highly culturally determined. It is believed that we communicate the way we do because we are raised in a particular culture. Culture determines the way we speak: what we say and how we say it, what can be done and what can’t be done during communication. Language reflects national traditions, customs, history and mentality of every nation, the way it perceives the world, the way relations are organized in the society. Growing up and learning the language children absorb all these cultural peculiarities.

In the 21st century linguistics language is regarded as not just a mere means of communication and cognition, but as a “nation’s cultural code” [3, p. 18]. According to it language is not a mere reflection of reality. It interprets it, creating a new reality, in which a person lives. The language of every nation is unique because there are different world pictures fixed in the language, which is a manifestation of a national mentality. As E. Sapir puts it: “people see the world through the prism of their own language” [4, p. 156] and thus, differently. So, our language is a condition, basis and result of culture at the same time.

It should be also pointed out that the way we speak is as well conditioned by many personal factors. The idea of anthropocentrism in the language is crucial in contemporary linguistics. As Boduen de Courtene put it: “Language exists only in the mind, soul and psyche of every individual” [1, p. 47]. A personality is revealed through different aspects (social, psychological, emotional, intellectual, physical), which determine the strategies of communication, social and psychological roles of participants. According to Yu. Lotman [2], everything that there is in a person there is in the culture, thus, it is as diverse as a person himself/herself, who is at the same time a creator and a creation of culture. So, every speech act is a reflection of the world by an individual and at the same time the reflection of general idea of how things are perceived by the whole society of a certain culture. However,

despite the variety of personal factors in the language culture serves as a basis for mutual understanding and can be imagined as "mental programming" [9, p. 2]. Learned behavior patterns allow an individual to function automatically within this cultural system, using the appropriate behavior. It provides a kind of safety because the world is predictable. Words and actions do not need to be translated, and the appropriate response to almost every encounter is internally ingrained in the unconscious. The blueprints for social existence control thought and speech patterns, conceptual and motor habits, and emotional responses, such ordinary and menial things as greeting, eating, showing or not showing feelings, keeping a certain physical distance from others and the like. So, culture determines the rules of coexistence and regulates people's interrelations. It distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from others, identifies a person as belonging or not to this group or society and ensures that members conform to socially acceptable actions.

Intercultural encounters are often accompanied by an instinctive reaction toward the unfamiliar and provoke emotional discomfort [8, p. 156]. The superficial environment might be the same, but any cross-cultural contact can be sufficient to cause some form of culture shock [9, p. 323], [11, p. 284]. Our "mental software" [9, p. 3] contains basic values on which our perception of the world is based. Words, gestures, facial expressions and norms, which used to guide person's behavior, become absolutely different. A foreigner can make an effort to learn some of the symbols and rituals of the new environment (words to use, how to greet, when to bring presents), but it is unlikely that he/she can recognize, let alone feel, the underlying values.

Cultural differences which may lead to misunderstandings and even conflicts can take place at any cultural level [9, p. 7]. We can distinguish between deep culture and surface culture. Differences in contact situations in the intercultural communication occur mainly on the level of message, and still more on the level of metamessage – the implied social meaning which is usually only indirectly expressed and thus underlies deep culture. Deep culture (including esthetics, ethics, kinesics, ceremony, values, sex roles, proxemics, taboos...) is "the underlying value and belief system of a society" [6, p. 53], which is invisible and is manifested through the insiders' interpretation. The regulations for deep culture are unconsciously absorbed from our environment and if one asks why they act as they do, people may say they just "know" or "feel" how to do the right thing. Surface culture is the superficial outer layer of a culture and is noticed in holidays and celebrations, arts, folklore, history, food, the way people speak and dress, etc. The surface culture is visible at first glance and thus is easy to learn.

Sociolinguistics distinguishes between high-involvement and high-considerateness patterns of behavior [5, p. 167]. People from cultures that follow a high considerateness conversational pattern (Asian cultures) speak

one at a time, do not interrupt while others are speaking, listen politely to the speaker, nod, show interest, and make positive sounds that indicate they are paying attention. Individuals are likely to avoid confrontational or heated discussions. People belonging to high-involvement cultures (such as Russians, Italians, Greeks, Spaniards, South Americans, Arabs and Africans) tend to talk and interrupt more, speak louder and quicker than those individuals from conversationally high-considerateness cultures.

Communication differences may be also regarded from the perspective of high- and low-context cultures [8, p. 56; 9, p. 89]. A high-context culture (Asiatic and Arabic) communication is one in which little has to be said or written because most of the information is either in the physical environment or supposed to be known by the persons involved, while very little is in the coded, explicit part of the message. In low-context cultures (Germans and Swiss), individuals need to be very specific, explain what is expected. The mass of information is vested in the explicit code.

Cultural miscommunication occurs because people perceive concepts through their own “cultural lens”. What seems logical, sensible, important and reasonable in one culture may seem irrational, stupid and unimportant to an outsider. We can supply the following examples: Americans’ smiling at strangers as a sign of politeness, which is so natural to them, often seems phony to Ukrainians. We do not greet strangers unless it is a shop-assistant or a doctor. In Ukraine women are not greeted with handshaking. We do not always introduce ourselves or our friends at the moment it is required in American culture. Ukrainians may ask questions which seem too direct or personal to Americans.

It is very important not to identify “different from me” and “less than me”. Many Americans believe that internationals, coming to the USA, should learn their culture, while they themselves do not want to learn anything about others’ culture. People from the United States can be described as ethnocentric [9, p. 326; 7, p. 257]. In our opinion, it can be explained by the fact that Americans are raised hearing how lucky they are to be Americans, that the United States is the best country in the world. If the United States is the superior country that implies that any other country is inferior. This unconscious ethnocentrism stems from an individual’s inability to see beyond his/her own perception of reality. The believing “we are the world” entails aversion, intolerance, irritation towards others and as a result prejudice, stereotyping and ethnocentrism as major barriers to cross cultural communication.

The research carried out makes it possible to come to the following conclusions: 1) culture can be regarded as the learned behavior patterns, the sum total of knowledge passed on from generation to generation about what should be said or done in the process of communication; 2) our language is both the basis and the result of culture; 3) every speech act is a reflection of the

world by an individual and at the same time the reflection of general idea of how things are perceived by the whole society; 4) imagined as a mental software, culture enables automatic verbal and non-verbal behaviour. It provides safe social coexistence and helps to avoid confrontations and misunderstandings; 5) cultural misunderstandings and shock occur when the basic values at a deep cultural level clash against those of another culture; 6) cultures adhering to different patterns of communicative behavior are very likely to have certain misunderstandings and conflicts as their cultures require different behaviour and responses. Unfamiliar behaviour consciously or unconsciously is regarded as wrong and unacceptable; 7) ethnocentrism is peculiar to highly-developed countries, such as the US, whose superior position in the world "allows" to regard cultures different from theirs as less than theirs. Such position entails intolerant and irritable attitude towards others in cross-cultural communication.

Becoming more aware of our cultural differences, as well as exploring our similarities, can help people understand and respect each other and communicate cross-culturally more effectively. It gives an individual a broader picture of what the world has to offer.

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