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Research paper

The Sign, Linguistic Analysis, Idioethnic Interpretation of Communication and Linguistic Persona

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Abstract

The purpose of the article is to review the theoretical aspects of ethnocultural interpretation of communicative behavior as a part of the national linguistic identity. Logical-semantic and logical-communicative components of an utterance are reviewed regarding the identification of ethnocultural components of an utterance.
Such categories as *sentence*, *modus*, and *dictum* are regarded as phenomena that are characterized by their ethnocultural parameters. A sentence-utterance performs a semiotic function that unites denotative and significative meanings. The significative meaning of a linguistic sign is understood as the internal form of a new meaning. The internal form as a vector of asymmetrical features induces national means of actualization of a *sentence*, *modus*, and *dictum*.
The authors propose to identify and study the specific features of idioethnic correlations among a sentence, modus, and a dictum within cognitive motivations in order to achieve the communicative purpose of a speech act. It is stated that the unique character of an utterance does not exclude idiolect means of its realizations within the framework of using preferable forms of modality and narrative formats in national languages.
The prospects of studying the basics of the linguistic analysis and the idio-ethnic interpretation of sign structures are viewed within the framework of the comprehensive analysis of discourse and communication based on the interdisciplinary approach. It seems to be possible to single out additional parameters of the sign and communication of any type by using this method. The basic elements of the communicative structure of a speech act are reviewed.

Keywords: *Cognition; Dictum; Ethnostratum; Idioethnicity; Interpretation; Linguistic analysis; Linguistic persona; Modus; Semiotics of cognition and communication; Sign; Utterance.*

1. Introduction

A distinctive feature of the modern humanities in recent decades has been the search for semantic and language dominant ideas of ethnoculture and a person. The interpretative approach that dominated the linguistics of the late 20th century was replaced with the cognitive-communicative paradigm of knowledge. This research approach is based on accepting the anthropocentricity and expansion of the linguistic analysis, on reviewing the language and speech within the dynamics of their interaction during communication, as well as on the leading principle of the cognitive science: "The world is not reflected but interpreted, <...> a person does not simply perceive the world but constructs it" [1]. Such mental reconstruction of the reality is carried out on the basis that conscience processes external signals by language and is presented as the linguistic worldview, which is one of the ethnoculture's modeling systems.
Regarding the language as a regulating mechanism of communicative behavior, it is appropriate to define the linguistic grounds of ethnocultural analysis aimed at modeling a linguistic persona and national types of communication.

In our opinion, the linguistic grounds of separating the idioethnic features of the linguistic persona should be based on the following principles:
1. The linguistic persona is manifested in the language and is a parameter of constant intensity in the communicative behavior.
2. The ethnocultural and symbolic nature of the linguistic persona is contingent upon the occurrence of an "ethnolect" that unites all speakers of a national language under the principle of uniting all the basic cognitive and communicative parameters.
3. Before studying the ethnocultural aspect of the respective cognitive-communicative entities, they should be analyzed as units of language.
4. Linguistic methods are used to study the ethnocultural characteristics of the language and communication. As linguistics includes various branches (cognitive linguistics, ethnolinguistics, psycholinguistics, linguoculturology, etc.), the methods of these branches are used.
The above presupposes that the linguistic persona is regarded within its correlation with the sign system. "The persona speaking" within its functioning in an act of communicating is a dynamic projection of the structure of a linguistic sign.
Modern linguistics fails to provide comprehensive interpretation of the term "sign". Starting from de Saussure who defined such

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basic features of a linguistic sign as functionality, arbitrariness, and linearity [2] and including scientists of the post-Saussure era [3, 4, 5, 6], the theory of language fails to solve logical-communicative contradictions of a language that "are absent from the integrity of the speaker's linguistic perception, inside the culture as the subject of *autocommunication*" [7]. The term "sign" appears to be too grand-scale and yet it fails to provide an answer to the following question: why same components of a language can be used both in formal-logical and in culturological language models" [8].

In order to solve the above contradictions, it seems to be practicable to discard the traditional dichotomy "language/speech" and unite two disciplines – the theory of language and the theory of communication. Such articulation of this issue requires immediate inclusion of the bearer of national linguistic culture (a linguistic persona) into the scheme of analyzing the interaction of an utterance and discourse.

2. Preliminary Observations on Methodology and Terminology

The linguistic persona is understood as a hypothetical model of actualizing the dichotomy "language-speech" that represents in aggregate an ideal bearer of ethnocultural characteristics during the process of realization of the national parameters of communication.

The term "ideal" correlates to the concept of "ideal type" introduced by Max Weber which is interpreted as the limit concept having no direct analogue in reality that can be used to simulate semantic and language dominant ideas of a person [9].

Such categories as "linguistic persona" and "linguistic sign" are general as "the language serves not only as a means of communication among all members of linguistic community, but also as a means to express individuality that cannot be completely narrowed down to social characteristics" [10].

The culture is regarded as ethnic substratum (hereinafter "ethnostratum") within the semantics of a linguistic sign that realizes its semiotic potential within the trends of communicative behavior (behavior settings or landmarks). Ethnostratum is understood as language parameters that are actualized in speech and that are aimed at the national way of segmenting the reality. This is, first of all, language behavior, which is a linguistic implementation of the national character, psychology, and mentality that are directly related to the ways of life of different ethnic groups transferred from one generation to another. National language is a basis for transferring the cultural information. In this sense, culture and ethnic group are similar.

Language and culture are semiotic systems in which sign relations are a priority. The plane of content of the linguistic sign actualizes the nationally specific features of the linguistic worldview in speech. The image component of the sign semantics is no small part of this.

What is important to note here is the role of associations in the semantics of the linguistic sign's that are by definition ethnocentric. Associative relations in the semantics of language units occur during the process of including words into speech within the act of communicating. The essence of this act is not narrowed down to uniting words in a sign situation that covers the relation of a sign to an object and the attitude of an author to an object of thought. The actualized sentence is regarded not only as a certain syntax model but constitutes a speech utterance in all aspects (nominative, modal, and logical-communicative).

3. Main Part

The dynamics of actualization change certain substantial aspects of the sign relation in a language that are related to the structure of those relations, the volume of a sign, and the nomination relations. Thus, if at the language level the sign relations are the following correlation: nomination ↔ significatum // denotatum, then at the speech level the linguistic sign has this correlation: nomination // significatum ↔ denotatum [11].

Within the process of implementing the contextual/situational meaning, the limits of the sign are modified, as in this case a semiotic act takes place, that is, establishing a correlation between the language forms and a segment of reality to be identified. Due to this, inside an utterance a word may undergo various semantic transformations, change its meaning, undergo semantic neutralization, desemantization, etc. It should be noted that a semiotic act is also preconditioned ethnoculturally. Here the component composition of the meaning of an utterance and semantic concord rules play an important role. As the very concept of context is not limited to only linguistic characteristics, a meaning is not a purely linguistic formation either.

When encountering any language material, a recipient should include the activity of the intellect into its perception. Intellect activity is mostly determined by the so-called "general memory" (in our case, ethnocultural) and correlates to a certain set of linguistic and cultural codes.

Word meanings are defined by a national dictionary, yet words taken separately have no complete meaning, that is, they possess an open semantic structure. We share the opinion of Vasilyeva that "the sense is an actual meaning of an utterance (text) preconditioned by specific context and a speech situation and not derived from a simple sum of the initial meanings of its components" [12]. The sense begins to appear only in a complete utterance which is a comprehensive linguistic sign [11].

A spontaneous speech act is often based on an indication to a concept or representation through another concept, an idea of things and phenomena having similar features, or transferring a typical feature of one thing to another, for which such feature is not typical. As a result, representations are combined, which forms additional information and creates a linguistic image in the communicant's mind.

By its nature, a linguistic image is ethnocentric and is formed according to the following cognitive-communicative laws:

1. Subjective conceptual redundancy forms a semantic gap, and within it new denotatum-significatum structures are created that are related to the initial semantics at the typical representation level but not defined by it.
2. Several new denotata are structured as an integral representation that connects in itself several associative chains and is formed at the point of their crossing. The elements of content are accumulated into the united semiotic space of an image that has not taken shape yet. This period is related to forming connotative meanings.
3. The initial referent is again defined by a new sign, the significatum of which is related to the first adjacency. This is the stage of image shifting and fixation [13].

Transformations of this kind exist in language practice and are realized as tropes and rhetorical figures. These mechanisms are also universal mechanisms of forming judgment and designation that function both at the level of separate words and at the level of superphrasal unities. The mechanisms are universal, but the semantic configurations that form a linguistic image are national. Under the law of subjective meaning redundancy, a comprehensive linguistic sign (utterance) provides a semiotic space for connotative meanings that exist as ethnocultural traces.

Ethnocultural traces possess indistinct parameters of detection that can be identified successfully based on the philological competence of the researcher – in other words, his/her linguocultural background.

The scope of ethnostratum changes due to the context conditions, the language competence of communicants, and the emotional contour of the communicative situation. The essential parameters of situationality, language competence, and emotionality are arcwise connected to the national and cultural features of communication.

A central figure of the *dynamic scheme of a linguistic sign* is an interpretant as a representative of a certain linguocultural community, which is always present in the structure of an utterance *by default* (using IT slang). According to Kubryakova, "due to the fact that signs have material bodies (a body of a sign), signs are *perceived* and *identifie*d (stage 1 of forming the semantics of a linguistic sign), and due to having a meaning, signs are *interpreted* (stage 2)" [14].

If we consider a language as a dynamic semiotic system, the structure of the sign structure forms a multidimensional substance. Along with concepts and correlating denotata and grammatical meanings, a linguistic sign, being enriched by additional connotative meanings, implements its pragmatic potential due to the initial valence parameters. From the semiotic point of view, the most important moment of a sign system functioning (as mentioned above) is the mode of interpreting as a stage of message decoding linked to the contextual format of utterances. In view of the above, the dynamic (process-related) model of semiosis can have the following components:

1) name (significatum as an information carrier);
2) the recipient of a message;
3) significatum;
4) the situation context (meaning shift stage);
5) interpretation.

Thus, a shifted structure of a meaning lies at the root of the ethnocultural system of semantic configurations (language images). The ethnocentric elements of a linguistic sign are identified during the comprehensive analysis of speech functioning. As is known, the main components of the semantic-conceptual structure of an utterance are the subject-proposition substructure, deictic component, and modal-factitive frame. Deixis (pronouns and gender terms), directly correlating to the participants in communication, can also be included here. It is presumed that ethnocultural traces can be identified in all the above elements.

Logical-semantic and logical-communicative mechanisms of forming an utterance are basic structural elements of a linguistic sign within the dynamics of its implementation and reflect the ethnocultural features of communicative behavior of a national linguistic persona. In order words, *modus*, *dictum*, and *proposition* are proposed to be interpreted as basic categories for identifying the idioethnic component of an utterance.

If *modus*, which expresses the speaker's attitude towards the content of an utterance (a communicative function, conditions and aim of communication), and *dictum*, which designates an event frame of an utterance (the nominative function, subject relations among objects), are ethnocentric by their communicative parameters, then the *proposition* as a universal logical structure of an utterance seems not to be able to communicate a nationally specific worldview. Let us consider each concept separately and in reference to each other.

Proposition forms the basis of proposition semantics and is interpreted, first of all, within the context of the semantic function as one of the generators of linguocultural meanings. In accordance with the aim of the research, proposition is defined as the semantic structure of a linguistic sign that unites denotatum and significatum, the latter playing the leading role. The image element of the proposition is also important for identifying the parameters of the ethnostratum: "…proposition expresses a certain event or status as relation between logically equal objects… contains an imagery element and thus reflects the reality more directly than a sentence. As a picture, it expresses the whole episode without instructing direction and order of reviewing separate details" [15]. As we can see, a proposition structure is a picture of "objects of thought" and "subject situations" that are positioned in a certain way and that reflect a segment of actual or psychological worldview as configurations of semantic components.

In our opinion, the proposition structure selected by a bearer of a specific linguistic culture has specific ethnocultural features as different languages reflect their own "individual" preferences regarding the logic, semantics, and strategy of achieving communication targets. This is expressed in the specific configuration of the semantic components of an utterance in national languages. There are at least two types of proposition dichotomies: subjectivity – objectivity/creativity – descriptivity that differ in usage limitations, in particular, regarding certain types of verbs. A category of "verb" is interesting by the fact that a verb, being a reduced proposition, has as its denotatum a situation able to develop. A verb acts as a national-cultural component of the dynamic worldview [16].

Thus, in French a constitutive component is the prevailing proposition element of an utterance; this component is represented by the verb *vouloir* as the carrier of the subjective format of the proposition. This verb, as compared to its Russian equivalent *khotet'* (to want), has a higher priority within the French communicative paradigm [11]. The second key element of the French ethnostratum is the category "creativity", the selection of which leads to restrictions in using stative verbs, such restrictions being absent in descriptive context. Here we speak about the preferable format of proposition in the French usage introduced by the verb *avoir* as opposed to the Russian stative verb *byt'* (to be). These verbs can be considered as the most active from the point of view of proposition for each language, respectively.

Modality through a corresponding type of proposition presents one and the same event either as existing (the "descriptive" type of proposition) or as a statement, the implementation of which is only possible (the "creative" type of proposition). Modus as part of an utterance performing the basic communicative function is linked to modal meanings of units that constitute the utterance. First of all, we speak about modal words here – *vozmozhno*, *mozhet byt'* (it's possible, maybe) – *il est possible, peut-être* (presumption modus); *somnitelno*, *veroyatno* (it is doubtful, it is probable) – *il est douteux, il est probable* (assumption modus); *vidno*, *slyshno* (it is seen, it is heard) – *on voit, on entend* (perception modus), etc. At the same time, the modal frame of the utterance does not narrow down to the immediate functioning of descriptive semantics of mental predicates and predicates of sensory perception. For example, perception verbs can develop epistemic meanings and introduce proposition. In national languages, this happens in various ways and to a different extent. In Russian, for example, it is highly likely that the verbs *slyshat'* (to hear) and *chuvstvovat'* (to feel) are the most epistemic (*slyshish', kak pahnet; chuvstvuete, kak zvuchit*). It seems that in French the verbs of visual perception are most active epistemically (*regarde que c'est bon; tu vois je n'ai pas oublié*).

It should be noted that in Russian, modality is often linked to the mood of the verb and, as a rule, introduces the opposition reality/irreality (deontic modality). In French, modality reflects the *subjective attitude* of the speaker to an event or action (alethic modality). This can be shown, for example, by the fact that among Russian categories of tense there is no special subjunctive mood (*Subjonctif*), and thus in Russian, communicants' attitude towards a subject of speech is preferably expressed through lexical means.

Modality regulates forming speech acts by representatives of each national-cultural community, that is, it has ontological status of selecting a model of linguistic behavior. Selecting a modality is often linked to the emotive aspect of communication: "Emotions have cognitive basis: they are based on knowledge and presumptions. Their cognitive component is primary as regards the emotive component" [17].

Modality is linked to the communicative direction of an utterance and can be expressed by different linguistic means in different languages. In this case, we mean a modal structure of a language system where national dictum that performs a nominative function reflects the specific nature of ways of nominations where the ethnocultural trace can be found. Here we speak, first of all, of the national specific nature of secondary nomination technique.

In its occasional aspect, secondary nomination cannot be simulated and fixed in dictionary entries as it is closely connected to the context conditions, and here the primary role is played by a communicant (the author of a message) and not by the common usage.

In this sense, the occasional nature of secondary nomination is not regarded as the uniqueness of the usage but is interpreted from the point of view of the unity of cognitive and communicative parameters of the functioning of the linguistic material. The essential characteristics of the dictum can be identified in analyzing the ways of nomination that reflect the national-cultural features of cognition and communication.

When the meaning of an utterance is formed, a thought, according to Arutyunova, moves from the communicative intent to the nomination of an event reflecting it in this or that light based on the selected structure of the proposition and the communicative prospect of an utterance. The meaning of a sentence is formed during the selection and combination of suitable nominative means, and each of those, by contributing to the nomination of the event, corrects its own meaning that, as a result, is represented as a function of the meaning of the sentence [18]. Thus, in the language opportunities for deviating from regular rules of integration are also programmed; such rules have specific ethnocultural configurations. Spontaneous processes of secondary nomination constantly occur in a language, and they are not so accidental as regards the selection of motivating features and the results. This motivation is expressed by the fact that secondary nominations have an internal form that acts as an intermediary between a new meaning and its reference to reality. The re-considered meaning of a word sign not only adjusts to expressing a new extra-linguistic meaning, but also mediates it during the very process of expression.

It should be noted that the motive of selecting a linguistic form can be far from the core of mediating the meaning which is characteristic for a non-typical sphere of nomination. A certain scope of the significative content of a re-considered linguistic form acts as an *internal form of the new meaning*. The internal form of a linguistic unit carries asymmetrical features that lay in the basis of national ways of implementing the proposition and the modus in the dictum.

It is assumed that the ethnocultural trace in the logical-semantic and syntax structure of an utterance can be identified as a result of analyzing the *specific nature of correlation* of the proposition, the modus, and the dictum in national languages. The following positions-preferences are proposed to be used for identifying the ethnostratum of an utterance:

1. The structure of the proposition (selecting the configuration and the type of the proposition).
2. The character of the modus (preferred modality).
3. The specific nature of nomination (characteristics of the dictum) [19].

Each position is considered in its relation to the communicative targets of the speech act, which are universal in content and national in ways of achievement.

The deictic component, as mentioned above, is an important element of the structure of an utterance. An utterance as one of the forms of expressing the national linguistic persona correlates to a certain type of the latter's attitude towards the reality, and the deictic can be considered as a carrier of ethnocultural information. In this sense, the unit can act as one of linguistic representatives of a national linguistic persona.

As is known, deictic units are identifying language units, the reference of which is established within a context functioning of an utterance. In logic, deictics are called indexials. The main function of indexials is the function of indication referenced to an extra-linguistic object or situation. The most prominent representatives of this type of units are pronouns and gender terms.

According to Paducheva, deixis constitutes the core of egocentric language units, the semantics of which is substantially oriented towards speaker [20]. The personal characteristics of the subject are defined, in particular, due to the presence/absence of deictics or elements that replace them. The subject expresses its essential features during the process of communication by realizing its *Ego* in dynamic collaboration with the ethnocultural *It*. Being a part of the linguistic certainty, deixis directly corresponds to the parameters of a national linguistic persona.

The deictic function as one of the reference ways is opposed to nomination and can be considered from the cognitive-communicative point of view when identifying the ethnocultural parameters of the linguistic persona. Deixis can be considered as one of the vectors of a certain linguistic culture representative's attitude towards space and time that is fixed in the national language. Based on identifying the internal form and semantic roles of deictics in an utterance, it is possible to interpret the deictic component as a linguistic representative of the ethnocultural way to explore reality.

By performing the indicative function in an utterance, deictics segment the communicative space and time of the speech act. In each language, the priority ways of correlating syntax and semantics constructs and their communicative status can be identified; this is expressed through the acceptability/inacceptability of using certain structures, such as instrumental, objective, adverbial, etc. The communicative status of deictics can also be expressed, for example, in substitution capabilities of linguistic units, frequency and obligation/non-obligation of their usage, and the semiotic potential of their interpretation. By identifying the usage priorities, the ethnocultural parameters of the deictic component of an utterance can be defined and the additional prospect of reflecting the national linguistic persona's characteristic features can be introduced.

Deictic categories do not include mood, modality, or pragmatic parameters of an utterance (illocution, perlocution, etc.). A distinctive feature of the deixis is the identification reference to an object, time, or elements of space, in other words, the degree of linguistic identity with the elements of extra-linguistic reality.

Beside the pronouns (personal and demonstrative) and gender terms, the following can perform the deictic function:

a) the person of the verb (the 1st, the 2nd, the 3rd);
b) an adverb;
c) the deictic definite article;
d) the tense of the verb;
e) the meaning of the verb (*ça fait trois jours que je ne l'ai pas vu* – the semantics of the verb indicates the time reference to the moment of speech);
f) quantified words (*everybody was happy* – not all representatives of the humankind, but a group of people identified by the context);
g) some modal words, the usage of which is contingent upon the set of speaker's presumptions, his/her idea of socially significant and individually implemented possibilities (*it is possible, it is necessary*);
h) prepositions referring to the notion of space (Russian *v* (in), French *sur*).

The mentioned components of an utterance, while performing the deictic function, act as reference indicators which is unusual for them. Indexials exist in all languages but are used differently. Thus, researchers note the general trend of using deictics in French and Russian: in French, pronouns or gender terms are more often used, while in Russian – proper nouns or aspect terms [11].

The priority usage of a certain type of deictics reflects the specific nature of constructing reality in the mental paradigm of national language speakers and the specific features of the linguistic persona's communicative behavior.

4. Discussion

The linguistic persona is mediated in the linguistic activity, which becomes possible based on the conventionality of semantic structures and due to the presence of common ethnocultural archetypes in the collective unconscious.

During the process of communication, an individual creates a "sub-language" that is a personified marker of speaker's individuality, a certain variant of the national language.

A communicative persona is not homogeneous, that is, it includes various roles while preserving its identity. The communicative

persona of a Frenchman integrates various communicative strata, irrespective of profession, social status, or psychosomatic characteristics.

In this sense, it is possible to speak about the functional parameters of communicative competence. The source of the communicative field formation is not only linguistic or communicative aspects, but also the worldview. It is against this background that we propose a multistage model of a linguistic persona based on the results of analyzing the linguistic and communicative behavior of the representatives of the national ethnocultural community that correspond to a certain type of linguistic implementation of key national concepts.

The essential features of the linguistic persona can be considered from a methodological point of view. The exemplarity of the language, the variety of word-formation models, and the rich palette of imagery possess all the qualities for optimizing the creative possibilities of the national language. Beside the above-mentioned possibilities of using language to enrich the speech usage and communication, we can list other productive approaches to studying the discourse in order to exercise linguistic manipulation of language speakers' minds. This is the so-called content analysis and linguistic mapping, which are, in essence, methods to analyze the qualitative and quantitative characteristics of a text in order to identify the specific features of the text author's thinking and mind – his intentions, settings, desires, value orientations, etc. These methods allow developing a typology of texts regarding the functional aspect of linguistic manipulation of language speakers' cognition and communication.

5. Conclusion and Directions for Future Research

The basis for the idioethnic interpretation of a person's communicative behavior is analyzing the dynamic structure of a linguistic sign (utterance) that includes the typological parameters of its functioning and ways to be interpreted by a national language speaker.

Proposition is the minimal representation of a language sign directed at communication; proposition receives the status of a communicative unit due to its involvement in the thinking space (speech-thinking activity). Distinguishing proposition, modus, and dictum makes it possible, on the model level, to describe the essential features of a linguistic persona – its flexibility.

A language unit selected by a representative of a certain linguistic culture shows which information is most significant in influencing the addressee from the point of view of the ethnocultural priorities of cognition and communication. The specific features of deixis reference in national languages can serve as additional elements for identifying the typological characteristics of a linguistic persona.

It is useful to provide possible prospects of using the semiotic model of discourse analysis in the modern world. First of all, we mean hypertext technologies and computer design. A text can be processed using the said technologies and used in teaching a foreign language. A text thus processed becomes easier in perception and understanding. It goes without saying that hypertext interpretation cannot replace the traditional one, yet at the modern stage of intensive competition between paper and electronic information-carrying media this type of communication creates additional possibilities to motivate a potential reader and form a developed linguistic persona.

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