

# LANGUAGE OF CULTURE AND CULTURAL SPEECH

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The paper deals with the issue of language and cultural interaction. The author studies the nature of culture and language, their mutual influence. The human worldview is considered a reflection of the language picture in natural languages. Differences between languages due to differences in cultures are specified in the work. Special attention is paid to national and cultural originality of the vocabulary, morphemes and the transformation they undergo within the cultural processes. The author describes the effect of culture on language as manifested in the uniqueness of the process of communication in different cultures, which is reflected in some features of vocabulary and grammar, as well as in the features of normative and stylistic structure of the language.

**Keywords:** language of culture, cultural speech, language and culture interaction

## **Introduction**

The problem of “language and culture” is multifaceted. A cultural historian and a linguist, a philosopher and a psychologist, an ethnographer and a literary critic, they will all approach it in different ways. However, the linguistic aspect of the issue is at least two-dimensional, as language and culture interact.

Culture is opposed to nature. The Latin word *cultura* means something grown by human labor, in contrast to the wild. Culture is a product of social, not biological activity of people. Language acts as a phenomenon of both culture and nature. Undoubtedly, language is one of the most important achievements of human social history, a component of culture and its tools.

The question of the relationship between innate and acquired in human language activity remains polemic. It is generally accepted that a person has an innate language ability, i.e. a psychophysiological mechanism that provides the ability to speak. According to most researchers, this means the ability of the human brain in the first years of ontogenesis to learn, firstly, the system of signs of a particular

language and, secondly, the rules that allow to build texts by selecting and combining the right signs. The realization of language ability occurs in the process of human communication with others – native speakers of a particular language (or languages). According to the radical concept of the famous American researcher Noam Chomsky, the innate component of the language ability is the most meaningful, so language acquisition in ontogenesis does not start “from scratch”. Speech ability includes some innate and universal knowledge with which a person builds and understands sentences. Thus, according to Chomsky, as Budagov writes, the deepest features of language structure and semantics have a natural-genetic basis (Будагов/Budagov 1970: 66 – 68).

The commonality of human psychology is clearly reflected in the asymmetry of positive and negative evaluations. In different languages, words with the meaning of “good” are often used in the meaning of “normal” (– How do you sleep? – Good), and words that on the scale of “bad-good” occupy the middle place, i.e. seemingly neutral position, tend to move to the pole “bad” (average abilities, neither this nor that; neither fish nor meat). Words with the meaning of “big”, “many” easily develop the evaluative meaning of “good”, and with the meaning of “small” – “bad” (Красных/Krasnyh 2002: 38 – 40).

The intercultural commonality of the human worldview has led to the anthropomorphic universality of the naive picture of the world that is reflected in natural languages. In this world, the sun “rises” and “sets”. Here the meanings of “hot”, “cold”, “warm”, “cool” are formed by human perception of summer and winter, animate and inanimate. Unlike physics, which in meters will estimate both the mountain and the road, a person will say *a high mountain, but a long road*, but the colors can characterize the sounds, even not perceived by feelings of belonging (*light clothes, light sound, light romanticism*). In different cultures, people name the new things with the help of previously created names – metonymically, metaphorically, narrowing or expanding their semantics (Томашева/Tomasheva 1995: 115 – 117).

All these are innumerable manifestations of the intercultural commonality of the world’s languages and the basis of mutual understanding between their speakers.

## Materials and methods

I analyzed the differences in vocabulary and phraseology of several languages – English, Ukrainian, and Russian. Differences between languages due to differences in cultures are most noticeable in vocabulary and phraseology, as the nominative means of language are most closely related to extralingual reality. In any language and dialect, there are words that do not have a one-word translation in other languages. This is the so-called non-equivalent vocabulary, mainly – the designation of specific phenomena of local culture. In the case of borrowing into a foreign language, non-equivalent words are called exotic vocabulary (exoticisms). Exoticisms and ethnographisms do not so much reveal or interpret culture but symbolize it. The words *esquire*, *speaker*, *cricket*, *shilling* are strongly associated with England; *kishlak*, *arik*, *dehkanin* are signs of Central Asian culture; *sakura*, *geisha*, *ikebana*, *sake* – signs of traditional Japanese culture etc. (Жайворонок/Zhaivoronok 1996: 12 – 13).

Chronological exoticisms are historicisms. They are also untranslatable, and in the meantime, they are the keys to understanding the past of a culture. That is why lexicological research is becoming the main tool in the study of pre-written spiritual culture.

National and cultural originality of vocabulary can be manifested not only in the presence of a series of specific words, but also in the absence of words for meanings expressed in other languages. Such “white spots on the semantic map of language”, are called gaps. Like non-equivalent words, gaps are visible only when comparing languages. The reasons for the gaps are different. In some cases, the gaps are due to differences in the respective cultures. For example, in English, the word *lawyer* has several meanings of legal profession: *attorney*, *barrister* – a lawyer who has the right to appear in higher courts, *solicitor* (advisers for clients, including organizations and firms, who prepare cases for the barrister; has the right to appear in lower courts), *counsel*, *counsellor*, *advocate* – a lawyer of the highest rank. In Russian and Ukrainian, this notation corresponds to one word – *адвокат*. In other cases, the gap is not due to the absence of a corresponding denotation in one of the languages, but to the fact that it is not important for the language to distinguish what the other language distinguishes.

There are different classifications of non-equivalent vocabulary (gaps) in the modern linguistic literature; these are primarily absolute and relative gaps. Absolute gaps are cases when there is no one-word equivalent in another language, relative gaps can be filled descriptively, for example, the Ukrainian words *chumak*, *galushki*, *bandura*, *borshch* etc.

Such vocabulary is in a way a part of national culture, it reflects its ethno-national elements, which have no equivalents in the languages of neighboring countries and therefore belong to non-equivalent vocabulary.

Differences in cultures may be reflected in the fact that in different languages words coinciding with denotations (with the same visual reference) may differ in connotative semantics (i.e., by their emotional and evaluative nuances).

The Hungarian linguist F. Papp wrote about the differences in associations connected with the image of *a swamp* in different languages. If in the Hungarian perception, *a swamp* evokes the idea of decay, etc., in the Finnish language *a swamp* is something quite good. A well-known Finnish scholar compared the Finnish language to *a swamp* in which tree branches fell, because the language has preserved ancient borrowings for centuries. Therefore, for him, *a swamp* is something quite beautiful, with which you can compare the native language, that is, *a swamp* is not so much a place of decay as a place of preservation. This phenomenon is discussed in the works of Gamkrelidze (Гамкредидзе/Gamkrelidze 1977: 195 – 200).

In Ukrainian and Russian, *a swamp* depicts an image of routine, backwardness, and stagnation. In the Ukrainian language, *a swamp* is also a symbol of moral dirt, petty material interests as opposed to high impulses of spirituality (*He sits like a devil on money in the swamp*). I. Franko explains the proverb “Water does not laugh at the swamp, only the swamp laughs at the water” as follows: of course, it happens that all morally dirty people try to pull honest people into the swamp, and not vice versa, only fools laugh at the honest and smart people, calling them naive and idealistic.

Thus, the vocabulary is strongly connected with the culture of the people: 6 – 7% of words are inequivalent due to background differences; idiomatic (untranslatable) phraseology; the borrowed

word is also usually not completely equivalent in meaning to its prototype in the source language; common borrowings in different languages are always more or less “wrong” equivalents. In addition, the designations of natural phenomena (such as *the sun or a swamp*) can have different connotations. That is why complete mastery of the language is inconceivable without mastering the culture of the people.

The internal form of a word is the literal essence that consists of the meanings of the morphemes that make up a word (that is, of the meanings of its root, prefix, and suffix). For example, in the word *flyer* the internal form is as follows: he who flies, in the words *forget-me-not* – the one who does not forget; *yolk* – something yellow. The internal form makes the meaning of the word motivated, but this conditionality is incomplete, because the internal meaning is permissible. A. A. Potebnya called the internal form of the word its “closest etymological meaning”. Thus, the internal form is a way of representing the meaning felt by the speakers in the word. In different languages, the same meaning is usually represented differently. For example, the Belarusian word *zapalka* (a match) is related to the verb *zapalyty* (to light); the Ukrainian word *sirnyk* (a match) is motivated by the name of the substance for ignition – *sirka* (sulfur); the Russian correspondence is motivated by the word *spitsa* “wooden or metal rod”; the English *match* is unmotivated, i.e. for modern linguistic consciousness this word is devoid of internal form (as well as any non-derivative word in any language; historically the English *match* goes back to Latin *myxus* “oppression”) (Потебня/Potebnya 1999: 98).

According to Potebnya, the word is created by human creativity – in the same way as proverbs, sayings, songs. Therefore, he compared the internal form of the word with such phenomena as direct (literal) meaning in a metaphor, allegory or proverb, as a composition or plot in a work of art. Indeed, the internal form of the word for historians of the people's worldview is of exceptional interest. Due to etymology that reveals the primary motivation of words, linguistics is called the “shovel of history” (Потебня/Potebnya 1996: 223 – 227).

The effect of culture on language is clearly and holistically manifested in the forms of existence in which a language is represented. There are languages in which there are almost no dialects and, conversely, languages in which the differences between dialects are

very significant. There are languages that have not yet developed superdialectal forms of communication (literary language), and languages with a strong centuries-old literary tradition of superdialectal nature. In young literary languages, stylistic differentiation can only begin; in this case, for example, a great variety of stylistic devices can hardly be found.

The relationship between literary language and non-literary forms of language, the depth and nature of stylistic differentiation of language are determined by the entire cultural history of the society: the history of its state, worldview, its cultural and ideological sympathies and participation in interethnic contacts, history of writing, literature, and school.

### **Results**

The influence of the culture of the people on the nature of the normative and stylistic structure of the language is more indirect, but also deeper than the influence of culture on the lexicon. If the dictionary is a mirror of a culture, then the normative-stylistic system is its X-ray image. Vocabulary is denotative, behind it there is the world of things and ideas, this comparison is an external, superficial reflection of the cultural mosaic of the society. Stylistics is relative, it regulates the functional distribution of language in texts in accordance with the hierarchy of types of communication that has developed in a culture; it is a linguistic reflection of the structural features of the culture.

The effect of culture on language is manifested in the uniqueness of the process of communication in different cultures, which is reflected in some features of vocabulary and grammar, as well as in the features of normative and stylistic structure of the language. In every culture, people's behavior is governed by prevailing ideas about what a person should do in typical situations: how a pedestrian, passenger, doctor, patient, guest, host, salesman, buyer, waiter, customer, and so on behave. In social psychology, such models, or patterns, of behavior are called social roles of the person. Naturally, social roles are standard to varying degrees: situational roles have a high standard (pedestrian, moviegoer, hairdresser's client, etc.); less standard permanent roles are related to gender, age, and profession.

An essential component of role behavior is language. Each social role corresponds to a certain type of language behavior, its own set of language tools. Human language behavior in one role or another is determined by the cultural traditions of society. In different nations, communication in monotonous situations (for example, a conversation between a husband and a wife, a father and a son, a teacher and a student, a host and a guest, a boss and a subordinate, etc.) takes place in different stylistic tones. In some cultures, the conversation of children and parents is characterized by a strong stylistic contrast (special forms of respect, indicators of obedience, and appeal to any of both parents with plural form of a personal or a possessive pronoun); in other nations, such communication is “more on an equal footing”. In traditional Eastern cultures, the wife's address to her husband is the address of the younger, subordinate, dependent to the older, to the master (Томахин/Томahin 1997: 26 – 28).

Thus, the national-cultural specificity of language behavior is reflected in the fact that stylistic means that have the "same name" of stylistic marking in different cultures may be associated with different communicative situations, with different stereotypes of behavior.

The national originality of language behavior can affect not only stylistics, but also some deeper areas of language – its grammar and high-frequency vocabulary. For example, in the Korean language, the category of politeness has seven degrees: 1) respectful, 2) kind, 3) a form of politeness characteristic of the female language, 4) polite, 5) intimate, 6) familiar, 7) protective. Each form of politeness is characterized by its own set of grammatical, word-formation, lexical indicators. There are also grammatical and lexical synonyms, the main difference between which is that they signal varying degrees of politeness. Synonymy of this kind is observed in the circle of pronouns, some case endings, verb suffixes, as well as in the expression of several everyday concepts as “mother”, “father”, “wife”, “family”, “children”, “house”, “life”, “come”, “look”, “give”, “care”, “be”, “tell”, “love”, “paper” and the like (Жайворонюк/Zhayvoronok 1996: 12 – 13).

If the effect of culture on language is quite obvious and diverse, then the question of the opposite effect – language on culture – remains open.

The best minds of the XIX century understood language as a spiritual force that shapes the culture of the people. In the human sciences, there are no approaches that would open the deepest internal origins of human culture. For example, we are not fully aware of the extent to which the cultural world that man has created around him is determined by his physical and mental capabilities, such as human (anthropomorphic) ideas about what is *big, small, appropriate, symmetrical, and beautiful*. Apparently, the anthropocentrism of human culture is quite understandable only in the face of civilizations created on a different bodily and psychophysiological substrate. In many ways language plays a similar role in culture. The view of the world reflected in language unfolds in the culture of the people like a grain in an ear. However, compared to folklore, language is more ancient, deeper and more organic for the ethnos. That is why it is so difficult to determine the role of language in the history of culture.

### **Discussion and conclusions**

Belief in the defining influence of language on the spiritual development of the people was the basis of the philosophy of language of Wilhelm von Humboldt. An outstanding representative of German classical humanism, von Humboldt was a man of universal knowledge and diverse state activity: a classic philologist, founder of general linguistics, anthropologist, lawyer, philosopher and diplomat, minister in the Prussian government, academician of the Berlin Academy, founder of the University of Berlin. The deepest theoretical thinker, Humboldt was at the same time an outstanding polyglot: he knew Sanskrit, Ancient Greek, Latin, Lithuanian, French, English, Italian, Spanish, Basque, Hungarian, Czech, Ancient Egyptian and Late Egyptian and Chinese.

Humboldt was one of the first researchers of the indigenous languages of South and North America, the languages of Indonesia and Polynesia. Studying the language of the Spanish Basques, sharply different from the languages of the Indo-European family, Humboldt concluded that different languages are not just different shells of universal consciousness, but different visions of the world; language is one of the main forces that build world history. Humboldt's latest work, a three-volume study of the language of *kavi* on the island of

*Java*, was published posthumously. In the theoretical introduction to this work, entitled “On the Difference in the Structure of Human Languages and Its Influence on the Spiritual Development of Mankind”, Humboldt wrote: “In every language there is an original worldview. As a separate sound rises between an object and a person, so the whole language acts between a person and nature, which affects it inside and out. And each language describes the people to whom it belongs” (Гумбольдт/Humboldt 1985: 378).

The life of Kharkiv professor Potebnya was spent working with the belief in the need for educational work for the people. In line with the European philosophy of language, based on the ideas of Humboldt, Potebnya developed concepts of psychological direction in linguistics. The largest in the XIX century domestic philologist-thinker, Potebnya was the most influential figure in pre-revolutionary literary criticism in Russia. His name is associated with the beginning of “linguistic poetics”, which allows us to see it as a harbinger of structuralism in literary criticism.

In addition, Potebnya wrote the most significant pages about the fate of dialects and tribes, languages and peoples. He spoke about the tragedy of denationalization as follows: “In general, denationalization leads to poor upbringing, to an ethical illness, to incomplete use of the available means of perception, assimilation, action, to the weakening of the energy of thought; to the weakening of the connection of the younger generations with adults, replaced only by a weak connection with others; to the disorganization of society, immorality, oppression” (Потебня/Potebnya 1999: 98).

Potebnya found the organic participation of the national (ethnic) language not only in the formation of the people's worldview, but also in the very development of thought. This effort can be compared to what a switchman does – transferring the train to other rails.

The belief that people see the world differently – through the prism of their native language, is the basis of the theory of “linguistic relativity” by Edward Sapir and Benjamin Wharf. They sought to prove that the differences between “Central European” (Western) culture and other cultural worlds (particularly the culture of the North American Indians) were due to differences in language.

For example, in European languages a certain amount of substance cannot be called in one word – a two-membered construction is required, where one word indicates the quantity (form, container) and the other – the substance itself (content): *a glass of water, a puddle of water*. Wharf believes that in this case, language itself forces those who speak to distinguish between form and meaning, thus imposing on them a special worldview. According to Wharf, this led to such a characteristic category of Western culture as the comparison of form and content. In contrast to the “Central European standard”, in the language of the Hopi Indians the names of substances are at the same time the names of vessels, containers of various forms in which these substances are; thus, the two-membered construction of European languages here corresponds to a one-word notation. This is due to the irrelevance of the form / content comparison in Hopi culture. Wharf found a connection between how objective time is reflected in systems of verb tenses in European languages, and such features of European culture as dating, calendars, chronicles, diaries, clocks, as well as payroll for time spent, physical representations of time. Wharf explained the obviousness of Newtonian notions of space, time, and matter by the fact that they are given by “Central European” culture and language.

In the Navajo language (North America), verbs that denote different types of manipulation (take, hold in one’s hands, transmit, move with one’s hands, etc.) differ depending on the shape of the object of action. Suppose the speaker asks to be given an object. If it is a flexible and long object, such as a piece of rope, then the verb should be in the form A; if the object is long and solid, such as a stick, the verb is placed in the form B; and if the object is flat and flexible, like fabric or paper, then a C form is required. This intriguing grammatical difference has led researchers to suggest that children must learn to distinguish the “shape” of an object earlier than English-speaking children do.

Modern linguistics, addressing the issue of “language and culture”, seeks to avoid identifying the primacy of language or culture. The determinism of language and culture is most likely mutual. Perhaps it is safer to look for certain correlations (correspondences)

between the structures of language and culture, and in a wide geographical and historical space.

In line with such researches, Sapir proposed the concept of “linguistic and cultural type”, which can be found at the intersection of the facts of social structure, everyday behavior, art and features of language. There are two types: Western European Standard (WES) and Eastern European Standard (EES). WES languages are defined by Gasparov as relational; they are characterized by a clear boundary between grammar and vocabulary and more abstract provision of information in expression. EES languages (including Ukrainian) are descriptive languages; here grammar is closer to vocabulary; a large number of intermediate lexical and grammatical categories contribute to a more specific transfer of information. According to Gasparov, the features of the EES are consistent with its middle position between the eastern (Asian) and western linguistic and cultural types. Western-type cultures are characterized by ease of mastering writing, accessibility of perception of any texts and creation of new texts. This is because the system of Western languages is well adapted to the abstract type of message transmission, for which the contact of the addresser with the addressee is not significant (Сенір/Sapir 1993: 243).

The grammar here seems to simulate the situation of writing a text. Language is built so that it can be understood without relying on a specific, directly perceived communication situation; it is not focused on a specific recipient. The abstract nature of the message is expressed in the fact that in such languages the grammatical categories of social orientation (for example, the category of politeness), the categories of verb form and mode of action are weakened. However, grammatically developed categories indicate the external (temporal, spatial) coordinates of the reported event (categories of time, person). East Asian (“traditional”) type of culture, which is characterized by limited distribution of writing, corresponds to the language in which each sentence contains a grammatical description of the situation of oral communication, where all components of the communicative act are important: the nature of contact, their social status and relationships, specific details of the course of action, the modal plan and the actual dismemberment of the sentence.

Stepanov sees the relationship between certain features of language structure and the nature of written culture as follows: a large number of sound alternations in morphemes (such as *long – length*) facilitates the isolation of phonemes, and this contributes to the early creation of letter writing, which due to its simplicity (compared to hieroglyphic writing) leads to the wide spread of written culture (Степанов/Stepanov 1995: 56 – 57).

Hypotheses about the influence of language on culture and thinking have not yet grown into evidence-based theories. The phenomenon of culture is complex. Its structure, significance of separate levels and subsystems have not been clearly described and grounded. The typology of cultures is not created, the laws of their development are not clear. For example, we do not know how many different components led to the emergence of writing in a particular culture. How to compare the strength of different factors that have formed a certain appearance of a particular written culture? What was more important: the predominant types of syntactic structures, or the nature of the sound organization of the language, or the cult of writing in a neighboring state? Everything is significant, but to what extent and how?

The question of the influence of language on culture is open. However, we have no other way to find an answer than to build hypotheses and test them with the facts of the cultural and linguistic history of nations.

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