

Published by the decision of the Scientific Council
of Khachatur Abovyan
Armenian State Pedagogical University



Department of Philosophy and Logic
named after Academician Georg Brutian



W I S D O M

1(25), 2023



*WISDOM is covered in Clarivate Analytics' Emerging Sources
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ASPU Publication

YEREVAN – 2023

LANGUAGE FEATURES IN MODERN SOCIAL AND CULTURAL SPACE AND PERSONAL DIMENSION

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Abstract: The article is dedicated to the study of language features in modern social and cultural space, identifying the mechanisms of its transformation (methodological aspect), interrelation and reciprocal influence of language and society, language and culture (postmodernism), language and way of thinking, and human spirituality.

The authors have analyzed modern tendencies of language development, the levels of transformation and unification of linguistic variety.

Keywords: language, society, culture, synergy, postmodernism, cross-cultural communication, way of thinking, spirituality.

Introduction

In modern language as the most important means of human interaction that reflects the way of thinking, intellectual plane, spiritual qualities of nations, their culture, it is those changes that stand out that were brought into the world by the “shift of social and cultural paradigms”, national social and political movements and other external, extra linguistic factors playing the crucial role in transformation processes of the Language Science.

Appearing changes often comprise new language contexts. It was already proven that new language contexts bring into life new cultures in society and are interrelated to consciousness and spiritual life of human being, so the study of language features in the modern world could give the key to a puzzle of complex processes observed in the world and human being. Due to this, the urgency of the researched topic does not

raise any questions.

The present article is dedicated to the study of changes in the sphere of modern language and the Language Science that introduce significant alterations into human cultural life in the broadest sense. There was analyzed interconditionality of postmodernism culture and language, language and way of thinking, spirituality, the change of anthropological characteristics of human being as the principal factors of human existence. Moreover, special attention is given to the methodological approach to the scientific studies in this area.

The Principle of Synergy and Its Role in the Language Studies

The laws prevailing in the world prove that starting from the XVIII century, languages were constantly subject to change: classical language,

modern language, postmodernism language – all those types were growing in numbers and fusing (Lapin & Tosunyan, 2011, p. 196).

The contemporary researchers believe that the main principle describing all current developments in language and culture today is the principle of synergy for complex system functioning.

The notion of synergy (synergism, synergies) [derived from the Ancient Greek *συνεργία* – “act together” or contributing, compassion] designates such a phenomenon when two or more individual forces, energies, two agents acting together produce a greater effect than the sum of the effects produced by those agents separately.

Or, put it another way, the dynamics of mutual actions surpassing each of the discrete actions creates “the effect of flowing tide” whereas collaborative behavior of two systems cannot be predicted from the behavior of these systems taken separately (Molchanova, 2006, p. 15).

In a language, the synergetic processes are manifested in three main classical forms of cognitive mastering of new knowledge. They comprise lexical structuring, conceptual blending of senses, and cross-cultural interaction.

It was stated that type-forming parameters and culturally significant markers of language and culture synergy include the following:

- a) blending of registers and communicative styles, the general tendency to language democratization;
- b) internationalization of lexis at the mundane level with the purpose of “prestige” augmentation;
- c) creativity, language game, metaphoric build-up of meanings;
- d) decomposition and restructuring of phraseological units, paroemias towards the “new moral”;
- e) irony (mocking, teasing) and self-deprecating humor as the way of world perception, antonomasia, status use of proper names, brand (in clothing, names, make of the car, address, etc.); euphemisms, political correctness;
- f) intertextuality, allusions, parody.

The synergy principle “opens” the scope of “increment” of language forms, their content, meanings, and reflects the change in culture of global community, i.e. also performs a methodological function.

It is generally recognized that humanity is committed to the united cross-cultural space in

the globalized world with cultural diversity.

Along with that, on the one part, the process of language unification is observed (English – in Europe, Chinese – in Asia), on the other part, the synergy principle produces innovations, translation of which leads to complexity and diversity of language forms, transformation of their value-based and semantic content depending on cultural paradigm and its interpretation. It can be assumed that synergy acts as the mechanism of language evolution in the modern world (Kecskes, 2004, p. 21).

Language and Cross-Cultural Communications

For Language Science, the shift of cultural paradigms denotes regularity of the processes in this sphere. We place an emphasis on the aspect that in the cross-cultural environment, there exist not one culture but cultures subject to the existence of regularities.

Contemporary scientists, such as Gumpertz (1975, pp.182-198), Hymes (1972, pp.269-293), and Keen (1992, p. 115), believe that there is no such thing as one language, one culture or one communicative style.

In cross-cultural communication, interlocutors are well equipped with different variations of styles and their combinations that are realized according to communicative purposes in ever changing context. They are obviously influenced by ethnic-national, socio-cultural factors, but at a lesser extent than pragmatic and stylistic ones, such as outrage, joy, despair, exaltation (emotion, appraisal, expression).

Thus, thorough detailed analysis of each particular situation and each context of a communicative event is required.

Culture is rarely contaminated, new contexts generate new cultures and new forms of cross-cultural communication (for example, political correctness) based on, naturally, the old communicative repertoire.

In their communication, interlocutors rely on two sources from their preceding experience – lexical units and communicative styles. Their blending and structuring raise the possibility of cross-cultural communication.

In other words, in communication process, new bonds, “divergence in interpretation”, dif-

ference and similarity between words, meanings, styles are uncovered. They form cross-cultural communication as a complete whole. Along with that, cross-cultural communication functions as the means of forming language innovations.

Specific feature of modern communication in the presence of ample diversity of styles and pluralism is the idea of structure formation for successful cross-cultural communication.

It is worth noting that relating to culture, this idea is situational and depends on the context of communication when a word changes its meaning (Batkin, 2001, pp. 820-821).

Modern researchers point out that culture is kin to a word – it is both regulative and variational at the same time. Most certainly, it is not created spontaneously during communication act. Similar to lexical units, models of culture are fixed by all the preceding experience and its examples, i.e. the patterns of cultural verbal behavior, which is then activated and modified in the actual communication situation.

Thus, in a near sense, culture should be assumed not as any semiotic system but the one where the specific function of self-renewal goes upfront rather than the function of stabilizing and reproduction of system itself and what could be expressed by available reasoning.

The matter evolves from the sum of national and regional monologs to the global polyvocality of the third millennium, to “not the solitary unity but the dialog concord of two or more distinct” (Bakhtin).

Based on the foresaid, it could be stated that complex situation of cross-cultural situation existing today enforces the processes of “creation” in self-developing and self-organizing organism of culture.

Language and Value

Many culture-related terms and the very notion of “culture” alter its value content. From more than two hundred definitions of the word “culture”, the majority is of sublime, spiritual character. However, nowadays, the former romantic notion of “culture” has evolved. By the 1990s, the idea of high culture, being some higher reality whereas people creating it, being some higher creatures, had outlived its usefulness.

The old meaning of the word “culture” as something orthodox, dominating and sublime has yielded to the anthropologic meaning, in the spirit of K. Levi-Strauss: typical activity of any group of people (culture of electronic mail, culture of disputes, and rap culture). Along with that, all these cultures have nothing in common with appreciated values of the civilized world (Levi-Strauss, 1985, p. 275).

It is proven that values represent the core category of culture. Language is one of the most valuable cultural components, whereas its units are marked in value terms and are subject to intuitive and linguistic-axiological analysis.

John Seabrook was first to mention that “old cultural arbiters, with the purpose to define what is “good” meaning “has its value”, were replaced by new ones, where “good” meant “popular”.

Great tectonic shift takes place in the notion of culture defining the status of aristocratic hierarchy of “Highbrow” and “Lowbrow” referring to mass culture, the Nobrow model. Today, we are witnessing blurring of distinction between “high” and “low”, between highbrow and lowbrow.

The advent of nobrow culture means that old dissimilarities between high culture of aristocracy and commercial mass culture were destroyed and replaced by the hierarchy of “fashion appeal”. Nobrow cannot be considered ... a culture deprived of hierarchy but ... it has its elitism – the hierarchy of something that is fashionable. Thus, the value-based word content is often transformed nowadays. Due to this reason, the values that served to avoid the low forms of commercial cultures were substituted by other values: to find a reasonable compromise with this culture.

Historically, transition from contraposition of highbrow and lowbrow to the nobrow culture is naturally determined as well as the shift of cultural paradigms from monostylistic to polystylistic one.

It was proven that historically monostylistic culture is gradually substituted by polystylistic one at the level of cognitive activity. This correlates with the shift of “evolutional” paradigm by the “pluralistic” paradigm (Kuhn, 1996, p. 157) on the communicative level – the replacement of “humanitarian” culture by the “mosaic” culture (Mol, 1973, p. 322), on the level of culturology –

transition from contraposition of highbrow/low-brow cultures to the nobrow culture of J. Seabrook (2012, p. 131).

Along with that, the most characteristic feature of poly-stylistic culture is not “exclusion” but, on the contrary, “incorporation” of every imaginable cultural phenomenon that could be identified as the drive on “cultural tolerance”. And tolerance is sought-after in the modern society.

Presently, there are two frames of reference to the general state of language. The first and the most popular one states that there occurs “decline” in language manifested in many aspects (lexis, individuum’s vocabulary, culture of speech, etc.). Here, not only the Russian language is concerned. If in the Western countries this phenomenon takes the form of democratization, in Russia, criminalization of language occurs, for example, it is often heard – “don’t bullshit”, “don’t dumb out”, “don’t bother your ass”, etc.

Why ever did the phenomenon of “language decline” become possible and how dangerous is it? The frame of reference popular with the researchers is based on understanding that the process is limited.

The ability of language to reflect changes in the society is also manifested in it. “It is not our language that is criminalized, it is the society, and in order to speak adequately about this society, the language procreates an appropriate lexis. To report the change in economy and informatics and enable to speak about it, the language brings forth or borrows new words. This process cannot be stopped, but the society can be isolated or sterilized”.

The second point of view striking the eye in culture is *macaronization*. Macaronization (from It. *makaronisme*) is a word or expression mechanically borrowed from the donor language into the recipient language, usually with distortion. Macaronization is related to globalization and penetration the global market, thus, in hotels we can come across “the reception”, in shops, super- and megamarkets – “sale”. The most popular are gerundial inflexional endings – “casting”, “training”, “branding”, “marketing”, etc. It is seen that these changes in communicative sphere are integral.

Language. Consciousness. Human Being

In the language form, world expression is closely related not only with human philosophy of life but also with humans’ genetic structure via the social component of life-sustaining activity. It should not be left out of account that culture is profoundly related with embodiment and primary emotional structure dictated by it.

Consequently, anthropological changes would relate to language sphere. In this scenario, it should be pointed out that modern anthropological crisis takes place.

As noted by V. S. Stepin, anthropological crisis, along with ecological one, could become the most serious for humankind. Negative changes occur in biological changes of human being. Human genetic apparatus is degenerating. The number of hereditary conditions is augmenting. Many biologists bring up the fears about destruction of human genome developed for the period exceeding two million years of evolution.

Civilization forced people to participate in the races at the edge of performance of human nervous system. And the consequence is permanent stresses.

Nowadays, depression is competing with oncological and cardio-vascular diseases. Over-stressing provokes mass consumption of stimulants that has a negative impact on brain activity of humans, their memory, and as a sequence, speech, language, and behavior.

Communication facilitates the language change, when the element of activity takes place. In this case, one can speak about interactive communication.

It is worth noting that experience exchange, in the same manner as information exchange, is a rather diffused format of a dialog in the modern world, especially when its other grounds are unknown or unrealizable due to various reasons. Its principal advantage is that enables participants of exchange to get rapidly connected to absolutely extraneous worlds, literally to become “experienced people” that means being “informed people”. This is also related to the specific feature of a modern language form. Along with that, “inclusion into other dimensions” alters many words and even fundamental notions, to be more exact, “supplement” their meaning with new

content and the real ideas behind them.

The researchers of the problem point out that presently there occurs the shift of mental and cultural paradigms, rising generation of computer technologies, and supersession of semiotic cultural styles.

Therefore, it is understood that fruitful and constructive solution lies in comprehension of change objectiveness and the search for the real forms and mechanisms of new cultural reality existence.

The habit to comprehend and perceive the surrounding world by means of artificial tooling, such as the Internet, computers, movies, TV, whereas visual and image thinking is prevailing over the logical one, is entering into the new cultural reality. A person “grabs” information “superficially”, “in passing”, not by virtue of own profound analysis and penetration into the essence of experiences. This facilitates formation of a new type of analytical thinking, “torn”, “discrete”, and “quantum” logic.

The notion of “clip thinking” is coined by V. S. Stepin (2011, p. 275). It is typical for “clip thinking” that images, separate thoughts, fantasies are grouped spontaneously and not organized systematically. This mental mode is not the “Russian legacy” only, it dominates in the Western collective consciousness. It is formed by the modern television with abundance of advertisement, diversified computer games, the Internet, entertainment industry. Clip thinking is supported by the general atmosphere of modern consumerist society, with its ideals and patterns accepted as the image of desirable future.

If we go back to the above-mentioned notion of “quantum” logical thinking and analyze it, it could be noted that it specifically requires an image supplement. Conception memory fills up the “gaps, blanks” in analytical thinking, causes certain emotions and restores “reduced”, “discrete” information to comprehensive one.

Thus, conception memory returns perceptual unity of the world and restores the natural memory. This is a more persistent form of memory, almost undestroyable, as it originates from the interests and professional knowledge of human being himself and is inseparable from his personality.

Conception operative memory exceeds verbal memory by a wide margin. Therefore, words are not needed in abundance for good measure as the

information has been already passed on a viewer.

Language is becoming irrelevant, its emotional, psychological, and functional impact on humans is weakening.

If a literary text is lacking punctuation, its meaning is somewhere on the intuitive level in the very flow of precedence, words arrangement, perhaps, even in the very word sounding.

The meaning is rather “grasped” than comprehended. Thinking activity does not contain any profound arguments, a person loses its ability to be thoughtful, to indulge in philosophizing. He reads less and less, and it seems as if he is losing any interest in human being himself, the world of his emotions, feelings, compassions; such general humanistic values are lost as mercifulness, love, kindness, and beauty. Spirituality is fading away with them. Indifference is “settling” in the soul of homo sapiens. Language changes are parallel to change of the attitude to human being himself, to other members of society, to nature and the world. A person stops being personality, he becomes wordless, responsive “grass”, which is not able to think, feel, ... but “playing with the wind”.

The observed changes in the way of thinking give clear evidence of the serious processes in culture, formation of the alternative belief system, postmodernism and even postpost modernism.

Language and Postmodernism Culture

Postmodernism culture is becoming the object of intensive philosophical and culturological reflection.

Postmodernism is characterized by the lack of profound modern theory and image, weakening of historical perception, new emotional tone (“intensity”) replacing the previous ways of correlation with an object, and the central spot of new technologies related to the new economic world system. It is a case of forming meta-language, in which it is customary to write and speak of post modernity.

The tendency of styles linking seems very organic for postmodernism esthetics (for instance, contemporary film art). In literature, in the texts of novels written by the Nobel Prize winner Elfriede Jelinek, indivisibility, “slurring” of flowing information is emphasized, among all other

things, by generic proper names, and punctuation, to be precise – by the lack of punctuation (in the original) (Jelinek, 1994, p. 118). At the same time, the text itself is perceived emotionally and the meaning of presented content is understood clearly but on some “supplementary” level, rationally-irrational one, on the subtext level. Along with that, the quality of logical thinking is lowering.

Today, we are facing the formation of non-linear way of thinking connected with perception of indeterminism principle, hyper-textuality, acceptance of probabilistic and random regularities existing in the world as fundamental one. Here from, perhaps, originates multivariance of “reading plots, images, phenomena”. It is generally recognized that mentality of postmodernism is a dominating cultural mentality of our times, including the sphere of science, culture, art, linguistics, and text.

Post modernity presupposes blurring of the old distinction between “high” and mass culture. It is noted the ample inclusion of “high culture” elements in post-post modernism texts where citing is becoming everyday practice rather than the banner of new school of thought. This tendency is so widely spread that all verbal and screen text claiming to be intellectual are reeking with various allusions and hints at some authentic meanings that can be decoded depending on the degree of a reader’s or spectator’s informedness.

Thuswise, the observed tendency to broaden semiotic paradigm in the modern culture creates the reality when all around is perceived as a text, discourse, i.e. as the reality subject to interpretation.

Whatever seemed a work of art before, is becoming a text implicating multiple meaning.

According to Lotman (1977), culture is modelled in language (Lotman & Uspensky 1977, pp. 3-36). Language symmetrically encapsulates culture, poetics, and sign function of main trends in a society. Therefore, in modern age, when postmodernism remains the dominating tendency of cultural development, new language reality, being non-linear, unpredictable and complex formation, is formed.

The term “postmodernism” has various interpretations. I. P. Ilyin states that this is “a multiple-meaning, dynamically moveable complex of philosophic, epistemological, scientific, theoretic

and emotional-ethic insights depending on historical, social and national contexts”. Postmodernism acts as character-defined mentality, specific way of word perception, awareness of place and role of humans in the modern world (Ilyin, 1996, pp. 269-270).

There are various points of view on the emergence of post modernity in Russia, and on post-modernist culture. Starting from the early 1980s, post modernity has been recognized as the general esthetic phenomenon, specific appearance in philosophy and literature. M. Epshtein (2019, p. 135) believes that postmodernism is “the epoche in the history of culture commenced at the Renaissance times and ended in the middle of the XX century, and is related to belief into the meaningfulness of the world and the progress of humankind”.

V. Kuritsyn (2000, p. 128) attributes the appearance of postmodernism in Russia to the period after socialist realism. M. Shapir (2000, p. 536) believes that postmodernism appeared in Russia straight after the Avantgarde. “Postmodernism is the protest against ill infinity in the concept of history of culture, placing one stage after another and building up the unified line of development”, says L. G. Fedorova (2021, p. 368). By no manner of means, postmodernism abolishes all the preceding culture but builds over it, whereas “for emerging postmodernism as the specific frame of reference and the concept of culture, there was needed social, cultural and esthetic experience of the XX century”.

Conclusion

Specific features of postmodernist language demonstrate its symbiotic relationship with mentality, spiritual harmony, consciousness, and by means of those – human activity and behavior in society.

Language and human being seem to be “reconciled” in many parameters: humans as language remains open; text generation is always a play whereas human activity represents various language games; the mission of human being is freedom, self-objectiveness, language is free. Language is a certain key for self-actualization of a person and his repercussion of surrounding reality.

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