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Language Preservation as a Means of Society Evolution

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Abstract

The paper discloses the sociocultural nature of language and its inextricable connection with the mentality. It has been proved that during the processes of intersubjectivity through the attachment to other languages, the native language is preserved as a basic one that allows providing the growth of its diversity and uniqueness under conditions of the enhancing unification of the social sphere of life.

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1. Introduction

The problem of language interaction in today's globalizing information environment is objectively related to the change of role and functions of certain languages, their sociocultural significance. Modern information environment by means of intensifying the exchange of symbolic media contains a source of transformation, changing the human activity continuum, and dooming people to search and permanent change of their social reality and its internal state. Ontological multidimensionality of the subject is directly connected with the problem of socio-ontological specificity of knowledge, its producers, translators, users, under which lies the language sign. Language sign, along with action and visual image, belongs to the most meaningful ways of expressing and describing human beings living in the world of symbols, in which sign systems form the language of their interpretation. At the level of sociocultural evolution of the language as a fundamentally new quality of self-organizing systems, it serves as a

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conductor of cultural meaning. Giddens (1999) observed that thought and action are constantly refracted in each other and this quality, called ‘reflexivity’, is built into the very foundation of the system repeatability.

In the process of interpersonal interactions, the language not only reflects human life, but is also an expression of what can not be displayed directly. Language records socio-spatial contacts and activities of people, and serves as a communication means of the subjects and acts distributed in the social time. Language is an element, a kind of sociality ‘link’, providing connectivity of human existence beyond the physically represented interactions. In the course of sociality dynamics, language, connecting people, constantly overcomes and shifts the boundaries of its consciousness, enabling individual self-realization by means of interaction. Language contaminations, borrowings, arising naturally in places and situations of intercultural interaction and mutual influence, can be considered as a peculiar manifestation of this intention. Shall we regard an appeal to the language of international and intercultural interaction as a factor of the nation language erosion? The answer to this question involves an appeal to the essence of language.

2. Ontological aspect of language

Ontological nature of language was studied by Ricoeur (1995). The author proves the thesis that there is no character without speaker, even though the sign has even deeper roots; language allows cosmos, desire, imagination to be expressed; certainly, the word is required to reproduce the world and make it sacred. In this ontological aspect of understanding the essence of language it becomes evident the link with St. John concept of the word, coming from considering the word as the foundation of reality (‘in the beginning was the Word’).

Regularities of the language consciousness were investigated by such scholars as Barthes (1989), Deleuze (1998), Derrida (1998), Lyotard (1998), Foucault (1973), and others. It was proved that the nature of reality is semiotic, and with the evolution of sign-symbolic systems evolves understanding of reality. The interrelation of language, consciousness, lifestyle, and culture are denoted by various concepts (conceptual sphere, semantic space of language and others), which became possible due to the development of cognitive linguistics in the works by Jackendoff (1996), Lakoff (1988), Langaker (1987), and other researchers.

Language, showing itself in the capacity of orientation and diverse human practices, becomes a mediator of cultural meanings, and this acts as a civilizational and cultural mechanism to ensure the unity of the subject with a lot of similar ones, contributing to the formation of practicing metasubject.

Forms and methods of mental language representation of experience, and their use in the process of interpersonal interaction are related to mental structures of consciousness. Language as a system of signs, distinctive units, is firmly associated with human existence – human consciousness, thought, culture, spiritual, material and practical activities, the relationship between them form an ordered structure – the language system. First of all, it is the system of phonetic, lexical, grammatical units being a means of communication and expression of thoughts, feelings, desires, intentions, and so forth. The sequence of language units, organized and structured by its laws and in accordance with the needs of expressed information, is speech, inseparable from thought which proves the influence of language on thinking and behavior.

As a universal means of mental reality representation and thinking foundation, language reflects the world, subjecting it to its own organization and context of human life, creating reality, structuring it instead of just describing, according to Sapir-Whorf’s principle of linguistic relativity: language determines the reality, and the words do not describe, but create the world that was defined by Foucault (1973) as the unity of author and text.

Rationality in the linguistic context is an inherent property of initial language structures. Language and thought patterns are inextricably linked, introducing a whole, the universe, determined not only linguistically, but also historically and culturally, providing formation, reproduction and transformation of social relations and culture of society, known as the ‘mentality’. Mentality, being a part of the structure of everyday life, reflects the peculiarities of human life belonging to the same age and the same society. Subsequent generations inherit certain mental habits, attitudes, values, stereotypes of social perception from the preceding one. As such, mentality via language acts as the organizing principle, promoting the cultural and historical continuity, possessing inertia and resisting changes.

Various subjects (individuals, groups), seeking to implement their intentions in the course of communication, interact in the emerging sociocultural ‘space-time’ as a set of cognitive structures of common and individual (local) knowledge. By its nature, the signs are social and interrelation between the signifier and the signified depends on

mentality of a particular culture, so the social interpretation of the sign in different societies may differ.

Local and global sociocultural space become formed in interpersonal and intercultural communication due to mutual orientation of the partners. Broadcast intentions in communication are interpreted in different ways, which can lead to social costs and social tension. For this reason, understanding the intentions of partners become primary in intercultural communication, which show, on the one hand, intentions and life strategies of people, resolving problem situations by means of their own vital resources, and on the other hand – colliding streams of consciousness and institutionally backed strategies of persons being the holders of public resources. Thus, one can judge the quality of communication, the extent of its dialogueness and possible transition to search of consensus by the effect of adequate understanding.

Meaning becomes the most important constitutive object of social cognition, as social ties are relativized with respect to the cognizer, who is involved in social interactions, resulting in the existence of objective semantic relations being a must for understanding and interpretations of the language community as the guarantee of intersubjectivity meanings.

Adequate understanding and insight into the meaning of ascribed values become possible based on the language and culture interpretation of the facts according to the rules defined by humans. A characteristic feature of language signs is that they form a system of interrelated characters connected according to certain rules which constitute language grammar, and its subject meaning is the same for people who can speak the given language.

Identity of meanings directly depends on ideality of language, spoken by a particular community. Asking a question after Husserl (2001), why Hans understands Erna, the answer is found in the cognitive acts that correspond to one point on a tree of values. Understanding is possible, according to Husserl, as Hans and Erna belong to the same cultural and historical community, and the coincidence of the moments of individual cognitive acts of various subjects, providing their correlation to the same point on the tree of values, is due to their common experience, habits, beliefs, priorities, etc. Subject to correlativity of language and the world, language is a condition of the world existence as a common horizon, as well as a necessary condition for any individual understanding of the historical subject.

3. Multilingualism as a means of self-preservation and solution of understanding problem in multicultural environment

In today's multipolar world, the dialogue of cultures serves the process of rising new cultural systems based on the principle of rhizome, unity, nonviolent synthesis of various traditions and approaches. Spatial and temporal worlds of different cultures hardly lend themselves to synthesis, or even cultural co-evolution. In our view, life itself provides a way out of this situation. The fact is that an important principle of integrative and co-evolutionary processes is the principle of mutual complementarity, implemented within the common 'field'. The concept of 'field' as used in social theories, allows focusing on the pervasive dynamic qualities of the social reality – procedural image and regarding society as the image of field, or permanently continuing, endless flow of events. In Toynbee's work (1991) we find confirmation in the development of this idea, who notes that the study of human relations over time is more realistic and certainly more fruitful than any attempt to study them in an imaginary state of rest.

Removal of the contradiction in part is due to the common language of interpersonal interaction, implemented in the dialogue of different cultures. Indeed, any dialogue can be fruitful in solving a particular problem only when the argument of the two polar positions changes with the advent of the third factor, or field. The third factor is broader and deeper context of a globalizing world, according to which are interpreted and reinterpreted the traditional patterns and imperatives of the interacted cultures. This factor is determined by the overcultural and transcultural processes, initiated by economic globalization and preserving cultural identity. Ideally, continuation, at a new level of the classical dialogue of cultures, is a new sphere of cultural development beyond the boundaries of the prevailing national, gender, professional cultures – transculture. The concept of transculture reflects the synergy, virtuality, uncertainty of the modern world and constitutes the diversity and versatility as the heritage of a free personality, its virtual belonging to many cultures.

Transculture overcomes isolation of national cultures, their traditions, language and value determinations, and

expands the field of overcultural creativity. In this regard, transculture is opposed to the problematized today multiculturalism and the trend of growing specialized cultural loci. Without going into a detailed analysis of transculture, we agree with Berry and Epstein (2005) that it can not be equated with the global culture, spreading the same models for all humanity. Pushing the boundaries of ethnic, language, professional and other identities, transculture creates new identities in the zone of blurring and interference, challenging metaphysics of identity and continuity, characteristic of nations, races, and other well-established sociocultural formations.

Reflecting on the cultural universe in the context of the possible development trends of human culture, let's clarify the concept of 'outsidedness'. This concept, applied to all existing cultures, means first of all, freedom of human beings to live on the borders or out of borders of their inherent culture. But at the same time, outsidedness does not mean the absence of culture, because culture achieve existence in the personality structure.

Being the home of existence (Heidegger, 1997), language needs to be preserved, which becomes an urgent target of society evolution, developing dynamically in the process of changing trends to unification (centripetal force) – desire for a common language of interpretations, and to diversity, identity (centrifugal force) - trend to protect the right to uniqueness of the drawn meaning of existence.

The multiplicity of interpretations, values, attitudes, meanings, knowledge form the variety of contextual environment as an opportunity for existence of many truths and foundation for dialogue of cultures, their enrichment (centripetal trends), and at the same time preservation of its own uniqueness as a way to reflect the context of basic values, specificity of this particular way of organizing life space (centrifugal trends).

In the process of society evolution, such a mechanism of native language preservation was found in acceptance of bi- and multilingualism as a means of solving the understanding problem in intercultural communication. Thus, to survive, one needs to accept the right of others to the uniqueness. In today's world, when the surrounding reality is rapidly changing, language, due to its stability, is encouragement and support, allowing us to preserve our own identity and cultural continuity, since, functionally, language is a mechanism of genesis and maintenance of the objective semantic structure in a particular cultural community.

The importance of language diversity and its promotion is recognized by a number of international declarations, including the 'Declaration of Principles', adopted in Geneva in 2003 by the World Summit on the Information Society, UNESCO regulations – 'Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity', 'Convention on the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage' and many others. These documents state that language is not just an important means of communication, or vector of culture and filter of worldviews and values, but also an integral part of self-consciousness and identity of individuals and society as a whole.

4. Conclusion

To sum up, language taking up a key position in the culture, is a means of preserving culture of an ethnic group and ethnos itself. To preserve belonging to the ethnic group and build up active communication, in today's society people develop multilingualism as a tool for evolution of mother tongue in the constantly changing environment, contributing to the removal of contradictory processes of language exchange and language preservation.

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