

The Reflection of Cultural Semiotic Codes in the Language

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ABSTRACT

At the present stage of linguistic studies, the problem of attitude to language as a system, that models the world in a human mind, is one of the most actual ones. The given article deals with problems of anthropocentric approach to language learning, of a person and his place in the culture and also it is devoted to the problem of cultural codes of the language and their representation in the semantics of the language. Greater attention is paid to the elements of culture, in particular those of Kazakh culture and the Kazakh language. Also it tells about reflection of some specific concepts and elements of ethnographics of Kazakh culture which gave birth to a wide range of concepts of the language. In the process of analysis of theoretical and practical material, we conclude that linguistic world view is a set of ideas about the world, historically rooted in the consciousness of the given language community and reflected in the language, and also a certain way of reality conceptualization.

Key words: World view, code, culture, elements of culture, concepts of culture and language

INTRODUCTION

Culture and language are deeply related in that language can be used to reflect the culture of a particular society or the language can reflect the culture and its world view. Language is used to express and sustain culture and cultural associations that exist in a given society. Different ideas result from the use of different languages within a culture. World view is a structure consisting of ideas and beliefs through which a person interprets the world around him and also the world view determines how the person interacts with it. World view can be shaped by the culture and language that is common in a particular society. This is because people in a society use their language to express their culture thus expressing the world view in that society.

The relationship between culture and language begins when one is born. This is because a child is exposed to the environment and this helps him/her to become part of his cultural team.

Theoretical Background

The concept of 'culture' has been the concern of many different disciplines such as philosophy, sociology, anthropology, literature and cultural studies, and the definitions offered in these fields vary according to the particular frame of reference invoked. J. House states that two basic views of culture have emerged: the humanistic concept of culture and the anthropological concept of culture. The humanistic concept of culture captures the 'cultural heritage' as a model of refinement, an exclusive collection of a community's masterpieces in literature, fine arts, music etc. The anthropological concept of culture refers to the overall way of life of a community or society, i.e., all those traditional, explicit and implicit designs for living which act as potential guides for the behaviour of members of the culture. Culture in the anthropological sense captures a group's dominant and learned set of habits, as the

totality of its non-biological inheritance involves presuppositions, preferences and values –all of which are, of course, neither easily accessible nor verifiable. In what follows, the broad anthropological sense of culture will be pursued. (House, 2007).

Language is not neutral codes and grammatical rules. Each time we select words, form sentences, and send a message, either oral or written, we also make cultural choices. We all agree that language helps in communicating with people from different backgrounds. However, we may be less aware that cultural literacy is necessary in order to understand the language being used. If we select language without being aware of the cultural implications, we may at best not communicate well and at worst send the wrong message.

Language reflects the environment in which we live. We label things that are around us. For example, in the Amazon area snow is not part of the environment; therefore, people in the region do not have a word for snow. It simply does not exist. In areas where it snows occasionally, people have a word for snow, but it may just be one word without any differentiations. Most Americans, for example, use terms such as *snow*, *powder snow*, *sleet*, *slush*, *blizzard*, *ice*. That's the extent of most people's snow vocabulary. People who live in an environment where it snows during most months of the year may have a much more differentiated terminology for snow.

The environment will influence the development of technology, products, and the appropriate vocabulary. For example, cultures in tropical climates will not develop heating systems and, as a result, will not have any of the accompanying vocabulary, just as people in cold climates have no need for air conditioning.

In addition to the environment, language also reflects cultural values. Hall, for example, points out that the Navajos do not have a word for *late*. Time, he tells us, does not play a role in Navajo life. There is a time to do everything, a natural time rather than the artificial clock time that industrial countries use. As a result, the Navajos do not have the differentiated vocabulary connected with time and clocks that Americans have. Time and the passing of time are things one can't control; therefore, one should not worry about wasting time and setting schedules

KEY CONCEPTS

There are different types of [cultures across the world](#) and each culture has its unique essence. While defining the term 'culture', there are several elements that together constitute as the culture of a particular region or the culture of particular people. What are the elements of culture? Basically we determine the following ones:

Language

The various languages are essentially an important part of the culture.

Norms

Every society or every civilization has a set of norms, which are an inseparable part, and an important element of the culture. This can include the folkways, mores, taboos and rituals in a culture.

Values

The social values of a particular civilization are also considered as an element of the culture. The values of a culture often refer to the things to be achieved or the things, which are considered of great worth or value in a particular culture.

Religion and Beliefs

The religion and the beliefs of the people in a civilization play an important role in shaping up of the culture as well.

Social Collectives

Social collectives refer to the social groups, organizations, communities, institutions, classes, and societies, which are considered as symbolic social constructions.

Statuses and Roles

A status or a social role is nothing but a slot or position within a group or society, which gives an overall idea of the social structure and hence is an important element of culture. This can also include traditional gender-based or age-based roles.

Cultural Integration

This includes the degree of harmony or integration within the various elements of culture. This can include elements like sub-cultures, local cultures and the difference between historical and cultural traditions.

The differences in culture and behavior form different world views for a person and society. Culture is said to be the beliefs and values that are used to manage people's life in a particular society and people use the language in the society to express the different views in the society. This makes the person's views to depend on the culture that has shaped them. A person describes his/her view using the language that has been developed by his/her culture. The understanding of people's culture can be improved by knowing their language (Jandt, 2004). People's world view can differ even if they are brought in similar behavioral patterns and culture as they speak different languages. The language a person uses to express his/her views will limit him/her. This is because various languages create different restrictions thus different people sharing the same culture and speaking different languages will have different world views. This is an indication that language is formed by culture and the culture of a society can be revealed through language. This culture is transferred to a new generation through the use of language. Thus for a child to learn a new language he should learn the new culture. The world view of a given society will depend on the culture in that society and also the language the people in that society use. This has forced many teachers and parents to teach the young **children** their culture and language so as to give the children the right views on their culture. The language that is developed by a given culture is used to communicate the world view in the society and also help in interaction. Culture and language give an individual a sense of belonging by making him/her to be part of a given community (Jandt, 2004).

G.Hofstede presented culture as mental programming. He says that every person carries within himself patterns of thinking, feeling and potential acting which were learned throughout their lifetime. The sources or one's mental programs lie within the social environments in which one grew up and collected one's life experiences. The programming starts within the family; it continues within the neighborhood, at school, in youth groups, at the work place, and in the living community. According to Hofstede's conception culture is always a collective phenomenon, because it is at least partly shared with people who live within the same social environment, which is where it was learned. Culture is learned, not inherited. It derives from one's social environment, not from one's genes. Culture should be distinguished from human nature on one side, and from an individual's personality on the other.(Hofstede, 1991:4).

In semiotics, a code is a set of conventions or sub-codes currently in use to communicate meaning. The most common is one's spoken language, but the term can also be used to refer to any narrative form: consider the color scheme of an image or the rules of a board game. Codes are rule-driven systems which suggest the choice of signifiers and their collocation to transmit the intended meanings in the most effective way. To that extent, codes represent a broad interpretative frame work used by both addressers and their addressees to encode and decode the messages. Self-evidently, the most effective communications will result when both creator and interpreter use exactly the same code. Signs may have many levels of meaning from the denotational to the connotational that is why the addresser's strategy is to select and combine the signs in ways that limit the range of possible meanings likely to be generated when the message is interpreted. For native speakers, the dominant symbolic code will be their language which is divided into spoken and written forms. The language will reflect the cultural reality and social codes diachronically.

Codes fix the relationships between concepts and signs. They stabilize meaning within different languages and cultures. According to S.Hall they tell us which language to use to convey which idea. The reverse is also true. Codes tell us which concepts are being referred to when we hear or read which signs. By arbitrarily fixing the relationships between our conceptual systems, codes make it possible for us to speak and to hear intelligibly and establish the translatability between our concepts and our languages which enables meaning to pass from speaker to hearer and be effectively communicated within a culture. This translatability is not given by nature or fixed by the goals. It is the result of a set of social conventions. It is fixed socially, fixed in culture (Hall,1997:21,22).

Culturally-variable perceptual codes are typically inexplicit, and we are not normally conscious of the roles which they play. To users of the dominant, most widespread codes, meanings generated within such codes tend to appear 'obvious' and 'natural'. Stuart Hall comments:

Certain codes may be so widely distributed in a specific language community or culture, and be learned at so early an age, that they appear not to be constructed - the effect of an articulation between sign and referent - but to be 'naturally' given. Simple visual signs appear to have achieved a 'near-universality' in this sense: though evidence remains that even apparently 'natural' visual codes are culture-specific. However, this does not mean that no codes have intervened; rather, that the codes have been profoundly *naturalised*. (Hall, 1980:132).

Learning these codes involves adopting the values, assumptions and 'world-views' which are built into them without normally being aware of their intervention in the construction of reality.

It should be said that the relation of language to the extralinguistic world involves three basic set elements: *language signs*, *mental concepts* and parts of the extralinguistic world (not necessarily material or physically really existing) which are usually called *denotata*(Singular: *denotatum*). The *language sign* is a sequence of sounds (in spoken language) or symbols (in written language) which is associated with a single concept in the minds of speakers of that or another language. Sequences smaller than a word (i.e. morphemes) and those bigger than a word (i.e. word combinations) are also language signs rather than only words. Word combinations are regarded as individual language signs if they are related to a single mental concept which is different from the concepts of its individual components. The *mental concept* is an array of mental images and associations related to a particular part of the

extralinguistic world (both really existing and imaginary), on the one hand, and connected with a particular language sign, on the other.

The relationship between a language sign and a concept is ambiguous: it is often different even in the minds of different people, speaking the same language, though it has much in common and, hence is recognizable by all the members of the language speakers community.

The relationship between similar concepts and their relevant language signs may be different also in different languages. For example, among the words of different languages corresponding to the concept of *a women*: *vrouw*, *Frau*, *femeie*, and *kobieta*, the first two will include in the concept of a *woman* that of a *wife* whereas the last two will not.

The differences in the relationship between language signs and concepts (i.e. similar concepts appearing different to the speakers of different languages and even to different speakers of the same language) may explain many of the translation difficulties.

The mental concept of a word (and word combination) usually consists of lexical meanings, connotations, associations and grammatical meanings. The lexical meanings, connotations and associations relate a word to the extralinguistic world, whereas the grammatical meanings relate it to the system of the language. Thus, a lexical meaning is the general mental concept corresponding to a word or a combination of words.

A connotation is an additional, contrastive value of the basic usually designative function of the lexical meaning.

An association is a more or less regular connection established between the given and other mental concepts in the minds of the language speakers.

Naturally, the number of regular, well-established associations accepted by the entire language speakers' community is rather limited – the majority of them are rather individual, but what is more important *for translation is that the relatively regular set of associations is sometimes different in different languages. The latter fact might affect the choice of translation equivalents.* (Miram, 2006).

The most important fact, however, to be always born in mind in translation is that the relation between words (language signs) and parts of the extralinguistic world (denotata) is only indirect and going through the mental concepts.

METHODOLOGY

The research is based on the analysis of some basic concepts of Kazakh culture, which greatly influenced the semantic code of the Kazakh language. To belong to a culture is to belong to roughly the same conceptual and linguistic universe, to know how concepts and ideas translate into different languages, and how language can be interpreted to refer to or reference the world. First of all it should be said that the Kazakh language belongs to the Turkic language group and has much in common with Asian and Eastern cultures world view.

Proverbs, sayings, aphorisms are small folk highly-artistic genres that usually have deep content and laconic forms. Being a complex they are a brief summary, synthesis of observations of social life, natural phenomena, original law, the Code determining people's relationships, testament of ancestors and a kind of chrestomathy that is necessary for education of generations.

Proverb saying is a logical formula, figurative proposition of nation. It is used for all events, in deciding on a variety of issues. Sometimes with the help of only one phrase a person is able to prompt the decision claiming vast and long argumentation.

ANALYSIS OF EXAMPLES

On the basis of the ancient Kazakh culture there are norms and samples of people's life, determined by the peculiarities of culture, so called specific world view. When we speak about Kazakh culture we mean basic concepts which determine the reference to the *Turkic Universe*. In this article only some of them will be mentioned. They are **"kut"** (күт), **bakan** and **zhan** (жан). According to the myth *"kut"* embodies man's life power. There is a myth which tells about *TengriUlken* (lit. The Great Tengri), his sons and a sacred birch on which like a leaf hung *"kut"* - man's power. When a child is to be born in a family *"kut"* gets into the house bringing blessing to a family. There are a lot of word combinations, denoting this concept in the Kazakh language: *"kutbereke"* which means *happiness*, *"Zholyny: kutty bolsyn!"* – lit. *Have a good journey!* Another important semiotic concept of Kazakh culture is *"bakan"* - the most important element of internal space of the *"yurta"* (ancient national dwelling).

Symbol of man's beginning in semantics of *yurta* interior, apparently, was *bakan*-wooden pole with doublet top. Under various phonetic variants (Kazakh, Karakalpak, Uzbek, Kirghis-balkan; Tuva, Mongolian, Yakut- bagana; Kumyk- bagyana, etc.) is known practically among all people of Turk-Mongolian nomadic world. The basic circle of meanings of the word *bakan* and its phonetic variants- "pole", "column", "a column for horses", "rack", "prop", etc.

Functional value of a pole in portable nomadic dwelling was wide. One of its basic functions in dwelling of Turkic peoples of Siberia was function basic. In tradition of the central Asia nomads in particular Mongols, purpose of the pole also was "to serve as the basic column supporting a ring of a smock aperture". In tradition of Turkic peoples of the Central Asia *bakan* is used, alongside with it, also for arising of a dome circle in installation of *yurta* and for covering with felt capes of the top part of a *yurta* skeleton (it is used to rise bales of felt coverings and throw them on a *yurta* dome, then straighten them with help of the same pole). In Kazakh *yurta* there is also other vision of a pole – *syryk*, serving as a prop during strong wind, for opening a smoke aperture of the *yurta*.

Besides specified, sphere of practical application of *bakan* is extremely extensive.

There are usually obvious certain sacred actions connected with *bakan*.

Connection of *bakan* with the idea of fertility duplication finds acknowledgement, in our opinion, in use of poles *bakan* in the Kazakh mode of life for a construction of a portable swing for youth which is called *"altybakan"*, literally *"six bakans"*; and it is known, for their construction were used connected together on three *bakans* which served as basic columns of a swing, and between them they adored lassos.

Thus, the analysis of functions of a pole *bakan* in *yurta* interior of nomads testifies to significant loading of this element of nomadic dwelling. Apparently, sources of the representations causing high semantic status of *bakan* – in the ancient epoch of the Altai ethno cultural community. (Shahanova 2008: 32).

One more important concept of the Kazakh culture is the concept «жан» (*zhan* – lit. *soul*), which contains a deep sacred sense and idea. The Kazakh language and folklore reflect a deep semiotic meaning of this concept. The basic one is the plurality of a human's sole. Usually they say about seven soles and each one has a certain name: a sole- breath, a sole –

human's life power, a sole – specter. They are usually differentiated by it's location in a human's body. This concept is widely represented in a wide range of phraseological units and proverbs of the Kazakh language. For example:

жан беру – literally “to give soul”, means *to die*

жан далбаса қылу – means *to be reserved*

жан дәрмен ету – lit. to make last efforts, means *to do smth. with great efforts*

жанды жегідей жеу – lit. to eat soul like a worm, means *to feel nagging anxiety*,

жанды жер – lit. – sensitive point, means *weak point*

жанды суырып ала жаздау – lit. to take smb's soul out of somebody

жан кешу – to bid farewell to the soul

жан тапсыру – lit. to give smb soul means *to die*

жан талас – lit. fight for life means *to fight to the death*

жан терге тұсу – lit. to sweat much means *to work hard*

жан ұшыру – lit. to make soul fly means *at full tilt*

жан шақыру – lit. to invite soul means *to come to one's senses*

жаны бар сөз – lit. alive words means *a good advice*

жаны қалмау – soul is not any more in a body means *to dote upon smb.*

In the English language the concept “soul” is represented in a number of units and word combinations e.g. *not a soul, the life and soul of the party, mean soul, soul saving, kindly soul*. In comparison with Russian and Kazakh languages to represent the concept ‘soul’ as the inner body of a person basically the component “heart” is used.

For example: *one's heart sinks, as much as one's heart desires, lose heart, heart and soul, warm-hearted person, with all one's heart, straight from the heart, for one's heart, heart-to-heart talk, to one's heart content, heart in the right place, to pour out one's heart, to put one's heart into.*

CONCLUSION

Thus, the given above examples prove the idea of differences in world perception. The latter reflects in the language. Language and culture are entwined such that people in the society cannot live without using the two. Language is used to express one's ideas thus expressing the worldview of that culture. The difference in language has made different people to have different world views though they share the same culture. The use of language policy is important as it helps the people in the society to know their culture and understand it.

The concept of the world view (including linguistic world view) bases on the study of human presentations about the world. If the world is a man and the environment in their interaction, so the world view is a result of the processing information about the environment and the man. Thus, our conceptual system, displayed as the linguistic world view, depends on the physical and cultural experience and is directly connected to it. Phenomena and objects of the external world are represented in the human consciousness in the form of an internal image. The system of images forms the world view.

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