

# Language as a State of Ethno-Cultural Consciousness

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## Abstract

The article deals with the problem of verbalization of culturally marked products of verbal thinking: ethno-cultural consciousness as a system of extralinguistic categories (cognitive ones, such as prototypes, patterns, images and domains; and non-cognitive ones, such as feelings, emotions, will etc.). Particular attention is given to those elements of culture (values, estimates and semantic interpretation), which have acquired the status of ethno-cultural stereotype.

## Key words

Ethno-cultural consciousness, image, stereotype, domain, semantics, denotation, connotation

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## Introduction

The importance of national (or rather, ethnic) roots in a person's life has been pointed out by many Russian philosophers of the early XX century (N.A. Berdyaev, I.A. Ilyin, S. Troubetzkoy). According to N.A. Berdyaev (2005: 135), the existence of mankind is impossible regardless of nationality which is understood as individual entity. And it is the national identity that includes each individual in the humanity as a national man (Ilyin, 1993: 232-233). The law of human nature and culture is recognized by I.A. Ilyin as «the great thing that can be said by a person or people only in one's own way, and all the genius things are born in the bosom of the national experience, spirit and lifestyle».

Natural life of every authentic culture lies in constant creation of new forms expressing the spirit of the culture. A.S. Khomyakov states that the forms, borrowed from the outside, cannot serve as an expression of the spirit of their culture, and «every spiritual personality of the nation can be expressed only in forms created by themselves» (Khomyakov, 1994: 456). Culture, after S.N. Trubetskoy (1995), is historically ever-changing product collectively created by past and present generations. The normal development of any culture needs the storage of cultural values, the cultural inventory, which should be conveyed to the next generations by means of traditions.

Losing touch with the linguo-ethnoculture, a person loses access to the deepest wells of spirit and the nationally specific sacred fires of life: «the whole centuries of nation-wide labour, suffering, struggle, contemplation, prayer and thought are contained and live there» (Ilyin, 1993: 236). I.A. Ilyin emphasizes that person's nationality is created not deliberately, but with «their mode of instinct and their creative act, their mode of the unconsciousness...» (Ilyin, 1993: 237). His emphasis is extremely crucial for cultural linguistics. These judgments of the Russian scientist are fair not only concerning culture in general: they are especially essential and organic for any linguoculture. Looking closely at how people believe, what prayer they read and how they recite their office, how their kindness, heroism, honour and feeling of duty are represented in different speech images; how they sing and recite poetry, we can determine the sons of what nation they are. Let us mark that it depends not only on conscious behavior of a human, but on his spiritual way of life, which manifests itself unconsciously.

What causes the uniqueness, the otherness of different ethnic cultures? This question arises on an annoyingly regular basis because many elements themselves are

not always unique. They are repeated in a variety of cultures. From the perspective of philosophy, the unique ethnic culture is organized by the system of experience elements that is peculiar only for the given culture (Polok K., 2008: 354). From the psychological point of view, the unique character of the ethnic culture is conditioned by the fact that «at the heart of worldview and world perception of every nation there is its own system of *objective meanings*, *social stereotypes* and *cognitive schemes*. Therefore, the human mind is always determined ethnically, the worldview of one nation cannot be simply “*transcoded*” into the other language of the other culture» (*emphasis added* – N.A.) (Leontiev, 2001: 20). From the perspective of cultural linguistics, the explanation of ethno-cultural identity must be sought in the words that capture images of scrutable objects and phenomena. Why do we seek it in the words? Because such a word grows out of action and carries the latent energy of the action (potential model of cultural activity). These are the culturally marked words that help to set a coordinates system in which people live, which forms the world image, a fundamental element of ethnic culture (see: Lurie, 1997: 221). «To name» means to attribute some certain meaning to the nominee, and to attribute some certain meaning to anything means to understand it but to include it in the paradigm of our consciousness.

Там в старину все жило, все цвело,  
Там он играл *младенцем в колыбели*...  
Неси ж туда, где наш отец и брат  
Спокойным сном в приюте гроба спят...  
Тогда явилось все величие народа,  
Спасаящего трон и святость алтарей,  
И тихий *гроб отцов*, и колыбель детей,  
И *старцев седины*, и *младость дев цветущих*,  
И *славу прежних лет*, и *славу лет грядущих*. (В.А. Жуковский)

There in the old days everything lived, everything blossomed,  
There he played, being *a child in the cradle*...  
Well, bring me to the place where our father and brother  
Sleep restfully in the shelter of the coffin...  
Then the greatness of the people arose,  
Who saved the throne and the sanctity of the altars,  
And quiet *fathers' coffins*, and the children' cradles,  
And *the elders' gray*, and *blooming maidens' springtime*,  
And *the glory of past years*, and *the glory of the coming years*  
(V.A. Zhukovsky).

V.A. Zhukovsky reveals the domain «Motherland» using the contrast vocabulary (opposition): *fathers' coffins* – *children' cradles*, *the elders' gray* – *blooming maidens' springtime*, *the glory of past years* – *the glory of the coming years*. Beyond the word in its acoustic or graphic form, as we see, there is a fragment of a living image from the particular ethnoculture. The consistency of verbal images reflects the systemic character of the culture itself, the structure of axiological and semantic space which is formed within the culture.

### **Ethno-linguistic cultural space**

One of the forms of cultural existence in human consciousness is the so-called national cultural space, or the consciousness which is common to all members of the ethno-linguistic community. Such definition certainly impresses with its

philosophical breadth and aphoristic character, but still did not disclose the nature of the given category.

According to the linguo-culturological dictionary (RKP, 2004), the national cultural space is the informative and emotional («ethnic») field, both virtual and at the same time real space of human existence and human functioning. This field becomes tangible in collision with phenomena from other culture. National cultural space includes all existing and potential ideas of members from national linguo-cultural community.

National cultural space can be represented as a field. Its core is formed by national cognitive base. This term is marked in the dictionary as a certainly structured body of knowledge. Cognitive base is projected into the ethno-cultural space, and becomes its most important part. Inasmuch as it is the base of ethno-cultural space, this knowledge should be ethnically and culturally marked by the ideas inherent to all members of the relevant linguo-cultural community. No one argues with this. However, more mysterious process is the way in which this kind of knowledge is becoming common to all speakers of a particular language.

First of all, this is not about the biological subject, but about the individual. In other words, the subject must become a person in order to represent any linguo-cultural community and become an integral part of it. This miraculous transformation is achieved by the so-called socialization. The main purpose of this process is to broadcast culture, primarily through language. At the initial stage of socialization culture is actualized in the form of folk discourses, the main representatives of which are folk songs, folk tales, proverbs, sayings and other structures of language, focusing folk wisdom. Then the ethno-linguistic cultural space expands: other semiotic means of culture get involved, forming primarily basic ethno-cultural domains.

Here we have come up close to the phenomenon of the *domain*. It is much written about. But it hasn't acquired a common understanding yet. Still, there are two directions of its interpretation: the cognitive one and the cultural one. For the needs of cultural linguistics it seems necessary to share the second view. However, for the development of cognitive semiological paradigm of cultural linguistics that would be too simple solution. Therefore, we will try to follow each of the existing approaches.

Let us start with the fact that the domain is born as an image, but, appeared in the human's mind, this image is able to move the ladder of abstraction. Cp. image of a *birch* in S. Yesenin's poetry: *White birch / under my window / Has been mantled with snow / like silver. / Downy branches / with snowy purl* (Yesenin). Perceptual image is created by visual, tactile, flavour, acoustic and scent means. Filled with symbolic and ordinary conceptual content, the image of a *birch* has been transformed into a poetic domain. Retaining etymological core, this domain was enriched by such poetic senses as 'a symbol of Russia', "the country of birch calico", 'home', 'a family', 'a woman (a girl, a bride)', 'light, warmth and joy of life', 'pristine purity and fidelity'. As the analysis shows, with the increase in the level of its symbolic content the image is transformed from the sensory phenomenon into the cognitive structure, the ethno-cultural domain.

### **Ethno-linguistic consciousness and culture**

The difficulty in the interpretation of the ethno-linguistic consciousness is explained by the fact that in terms of cultural linguistics cognitive and actually cultural categories are quirky and uniquely interlaced. The concept of ethno-linguistic or ethno-cultural consciousness seems to be the most problematic among them. If *the consciousness* in cognitive science means the highest, conceptual form of human reflection of reality and human's attitude to the mapped items, then ethno-linguistic consciousness is the highest mental category, which represents a associative semantic

form of stereotypical reflection of the particular ethno-cultural community's values and cognitive space. In accordance with this understanding, the structural components of ethno-cultural consciousness are, on the one hand, the cognitive elements (concepts, ideas) and, on the other hand, non-cognitive (feelings, emotions, will et al.). Another important component of ethnic and cultural consciousness consists of those elements of culture (values, opinions, semantic interpretation, etc.), which have acquired the status of ethno-cultural stereotype. A stereotype is a preconceived opinion, far from the direct opinion to the perceived phenomenon. Subsequently, it turns into a steady, collective, but simplified image of a person, event or phenomenon. Because of this fact a stereotype, being a ready scheme of perception, begins to act even before the mind does. From the perspective of cognitive science, a stereotype is not able to form the core of the domain. Its essence is to represent the terminals of frame structures of ethno-cultural consciousness.

The question of the appropriateness of considering the ethno-linguistic consciousness as a separate category still remains open. It is believed that any consciousness is necessarily objectified by the semiotic code which is culturally marked. However, another point of view has a fair amount of sense, too: cognitive processes, of course, are based on the iconic mediators, but these mediators can be not only the linguistic signs, but other semiotic means of transmitting information. As mentioned above, any semiotic system serves as a «language» or, more precisely, storage code in our memory and its decoding during the verbal communication, i.e. the transmission of information.

Further study of the sign-oriented isomorphism between the system of natural language and system of thinking promises to expand our knowledge of the patterns of accumulation, storage and processing of information related to the thinking. Thinking and language have emerged, according to modern science, as a result of a single evolutionary process. Acoustic language has appeared with the emergence of a human. It was formed on the basis of already existing vocal and acoustical apparatus, respectively capable to produce and perceive acoustic signals (these are animals' characteristics as well). During the human evolution the acoustic signals have turned into a complex system of symbols or signs. The most perfect of them are the signs of language. Obviously, these characters originally had immediate (direct) relations with the world objects. Then there occurred the process of substitution and total replacement of real connections for the conventional ones, which made the signs reproducible. This property is necessary for the language not only to store and transmit information like the genetic code, but also to perform the social, including stereotyped, functions. Since the property of isomorphism between the genetic and linguistic codes is due to, presumably, the unity of the global evolutionary process, it serves as the underlying mechanism of recoding information from cognitive stereotyping structures (frames, domains, *gestalts* et al.) to the language stereotyping structures which are the natural basis of synergy of cognitive and language consciousness.

Ways and means of such transcoding depend in general on understanding of the typology of cognitive structures and their correlations. There are two points of view. The first is that the diversity of specific thought structures can be brought under one generic cognitive item – the domain. In accordance with a second point of view, all types of mental structures are uniordinal: *domains*, *frames*, *scripts*, *scenarios*, *gestalts*. In our view, cognitive structures are in hierarchical relations, the highest level forms the integrated mental image – *the gestalt*. Then, by partitioning the whole into its constituent parts, three event structures can be revealed – *the frame*, *the script* and *the scenario*. An elementary cognitive unit of event structures is the domain – an operational unit of mental or psychological resources of our consciousness, an informative unit of memory, mental lexicon, conceptual system and language of the

brain (E.S. Kubryakova). Thus, systematically ordered and verbalized structures form the so-called linguistic consciousness. The same verbalized structures of knowledge, which, due to their socio-cultural importance, are being subject to further categorization, turn into the linguo-cultural stereotypes and form a kind of ethno-cultural matrix of ethno-linguistic consciousness. Following this logic of interpreting the relation between the linguo-cultural categories, it is possible to state that the ethno-linguistic consciousness is in some way a derivative of the ethno-cultural consciousness – the category which is not less mysterious and controversial. First of all, the ethno-cultural consciousness should not be confused with the linguistic worldview, as it includes not only the grasped, structured and verbalized knowledge, but also the subconscious.

In our opinion, *ethno-cultural consciousness is the result of reflection and stereotyped perception of the world image, carried out in accordance with a special coordinate grid of values and meanings, which systematically organizes the basic domains of a national culture.* In other words, ethno-cultural consciousness is a worldview revealed through a system of semantic and axiological structures, which are objectified in the categories and forms of the native language. Their linguo-cognitive nature provides (a) to a person a distinct reflection of the world and self analysis, and (b) differences in mentality (way of thinking, mental stock) of different nations.

In this regard, the specificity of each ethnic culture is defined by the structured set of verbally coded basic spiritual values, traditions and customs of nation. First of all, ethnic and cultural significance marks stereotypical language units: idioms, paremias, language metaphors and steady stylistic figures. Taken together, in our minds these linguistic stereotypes form a particular structural stage, the *ethno-linguistic consciousness*, which elements are representing the most important for this ethnic culture items: objects, events, facts in the figurative form. Stereotypes about culturally significant objects, recorded in the domains, frames, scripts and scenarios, are associated with prototypical features of the different classes of perceived and verbalized subjects.

Prototypical approach to semantics assumes that the categories appear in the brightest and most presentable samples (Lakoff, 1988; Langacker, 1997). *Prototype* is the most representative (canonical, referential) version of a sustainable object, which is characterized by the highest specificity (the concentration of specific features of the object), and in many cases – with the highest degree of operation regularity. Therefore, the Slavs consider *a sparrow* as the prototype of a bird; however, the Americans consider *a robin* as such a prototype. One of the common attributes of the invariants and the prototypes is the property of relativity, the essence of which is that the relevant meaning can be derived from the prototype of a higher level and at the same time be prior to a particular semantic variant, located on the lower level of the hierarchy.

The correlation of the concepts under discussion causes the algorithm of invariant-prototypical analysis in order to help 1) to solve the interpretation problem of the semantic phenomenon as a categorical meaning, representing an invariant; 2) to identify the network (the number) of alternate implementations of the categorical meaning under consideration (the diversity refers to the concept «the prototype» as the standard revealing the specifics of the meaning); 3) the investigation of variants starts with the prototype as a standard; then it goes to stages of standard properties transmitting to the properties located in the zone beyond the core; then the nearest periphery is studied; and finally, the far periphery is considered.

Prototypical attributes are the properties characterizing the objects of the corresponding class. Moreover, each national language has «its own» set of such

attributes and their hierarchy. Otherworldly, one and the same objects are perceived and encoded by the ethno-linguistic consciousness in accordance with the concepts of this class of objects elaborated in given ethno-cultural community. However, the mechanisms of their conceptualization are universal logically. The same domains in different languages may have different verbal representation. Cp. proverbs of different languages with similar meaning: Rus.: *мягко стелет, да жестко спатъ* (literally *Gently laid, but hard to sleep*) – ‘outwardly polite, talkative, and surreptitiously causes harm, trouble’; Ukr.: *На язичі медок, а під язиком льодок. У вічі як лис, а за очі як бич* (literally *The honey on the tongue, the ice under the tongue; A fox before the eyes, a devil behind the eyes*); Eng.: 1) *The bait hides the hook*; 2) *Iron hand in a velvet glove*; 3) *A honey tongue, a heart of gall*; German: *Honig im Mund, Galle im Herzen* (literally *Honey in the mouth, and gall in the heart*); Fr.: 1) *a langue de lune et le cœur de poison* (literally *The tongue of honey, and the heart of poison*); 2) *Belles paroles et mauvais faits* (literally *Beautiful words and bad deeds*); 3) *Bouche de miel, cœur de fiel* (literally *The tongue of honey and the heart of ice*); Spanish: *como la oveja y la muerde como un león* (literally *Bleats like a sheep, but bites like a lion*).

Nominative units of the increased ethnic significance include primarily everyday realities (clothing, jewelry, monetary units, musical instruments, and so on), anthroponyms, toponyms, the names of objects and phenomena of spiritual culture, rituals and traditions (see: Gurochkina, 2001: 122-123). Another nominative unit, whose core component of the lexical meaning is ethnically conditioned, is the connotative lexicon. Thus, owing to attributing different dominant characteristics to the same animals, words in different languages carry different connotations (*a pig* in American linguoculture means ‘snapper, greedy’, in Russian it means ‘ragbag, sloven’).

The perception of the same communicative situations in different ethno-linguocultural habitats can be ethnically unique (Bírová, 2011; Bartminsky, 2005; Kirillova, 1988). Thus, Russians, describing the man who is going to do something useless, who tends to exhibit excessive efforts where it is not necessary, usually use the expression *to go to Tula with their own samovar* (Tula is a Russian city that has long been famous for the production of samovars). Talented contemporary Russian composer Anton Safronov has used this idiom in one of his interviews in the following context: *«I have often been to Germany, and the teacher, who I was once trained by, invited me to conduct seminars to students of his class because he considers useful for them just the same “old school”, which I take along for them from Moscow. ... This year, for example, I am holding the workshops on... Schoenberg’s, Berg’s and Webern’s music. To teach the works of these composers in Germany is like to go to Tula with my own samovar. But apparently, they had a definite need in this, too. But then, after it, I’m going to teach them Scriabin’s and Stravinsky’s music»* («Private Correspondent», July 25, 2011). The idea of meaningless intentions is more strikingly «exposed» by variative speech construction with the rhetoric in the tutorial manner: *None goes to Tula with their own samovar* – ‘it is stupid to go anywhere with the thing what is already in excess at this place’. The idiom often gives to the utterance humorous tone. Cp.: *«To go with my own wife to Paris would be like to go to Tula with my own samovar»* (K.I. Chukovsky, «About Chekhov» // «Niva», 1915). This expression is likely not to make Parisians smile, but also it would force them to make considerable efforts to uncover denotative puzzle quite unusual for them. Not every Frenchman knows that a *samovar* is a metal vessel for boiling the water with a crane and an inside firebox in the shape of a high tube, filled with the coals. And for the Russian (previously and in our time) a *samovar* is a sustained accessory of everyday life. In such communicative situation, the French will certainly say with their light humour *allumer une torche pour voir le soleil* (literally *To lit a torch to see the sun*). Of course, their expression comes with the incomparably

higher connotative and stylistic architectonics. The English, on the other hand, use the phrase with connotation, which is quite devoid of poetry: *carry coals to Newcastle*, i.e. pointlessly supply someone with the things what they already have in excess. (Newcastle played a very important role in British industrial revolution of the XIX century, being the leader of coal mining), or *to carry owls to Athens*. But perhaps, even more exotic humorous connotative component is expressed by Indonesians. To indicate the situation of inappropriate eagerness, they use the proverb which literally reads as follows: *Row downstream and the crocodiles will make fun of you*. It must be noted that at the latitude of the equator it's not the chickens but the crocodiles who laugh (a chicken is prototype image for Slavic ethno-cultural area, ср.: Bulg. *пилета да се смея*; Pol. *kuron na śmiech*; Rus. *курам на смех*; Serb. *пилућу смејем*; Slovak *kurčatá smiat*; Sloven. *piščanci za smeh*; Croat. *pilići smijati*; Czech. *kuřata smát* with the overtone 'even stupid chickens will find this a reason to laugh'); in Albion the cats laugh: *enough to make a cat laugh*.

The semantic structure of such linguo-ethnically marked signs is a complex synergetic amalgam, «remelting» not only the subject and logical, but also the connotative semes. Special linguo-cultural message in the semantics of such expressions is carried by 1) indirect or figural component; 2) directly denotative component, or the basis of object sensory image; 3) emotive component; 4) stylistic component; 5) national and ethnic component (Alefirenko, Zharkynbekova 2014: 151). In order to implement a successful intercultural communication, the major task is not to preserve identical idiomatic manner but to deliver the discursive sense in adequate way. In this regard, we should not follow the dictionary in a blind way. And here's why. English proverb *when in Rome, do as the Romans do*, for example, is given two matching in the dictionaries: *с волками жить – по-волчьи выть* (literally *to live with wolves means to howl like a wolf*) or *в чужой монастырь со своим уставом не ходят* (literally *no one goes to the another's monastery with their own consuetudinary*). However, these two phrases are characterized by different connotative and stylistic properties. If the English phraseme gives recommendations to respect the rules of traditions in the given society and expresses instructive meaning without the explicit connotation, then both Russian paremias contain the negative assessment. Therefore, such interlinguistic equivalents should be treated sensibly, should be used only when the discursive context needs them. If discourse is not compatible with phraseological connotative background, the ways to transfer their descriptive semantic content must be sought. This is suggested by the specificity of representation of an object, phenomenon or process by means of any ethno-linguistic group. Due to the stereotypical vision of the world this specificity is peculiar for the given linguo-culture, determined by cultural patterns existing in the national tradition and by its linguistic projection. The investigation of the culturally marked linguistic items, which reflect the worldview within a single ethno-cultural tradition, (a) forming lexical and phraseological structure of language and (b) determining the particular discursive organization of the text, will reveal the specifics of perception and cognition of the world by different nations, and the nature of its reflection in the ethno-cultural architectonics of the linguistic sign.

### **Ethno-cultural uniqueness of the linguistic semantics**

The phrase *national cultural component of linguistic meaning* has not acquired a stable and standard understanding yet, although it became popular in modern research. It is only clear that this term is intended to aggregate the meanings that are born during the interaction between national and cultural factors in the course of the formation of the semantic structure of the linguistic sign. How to find the right key to his terminological content? – The question remains open for a long time.

Searching for the solution to this problem, V.G. Gak proposes to distinguish the national and the cultural specificity of a linguistic sign. National specifics of words, in his opinion, are determined by two factors: objective and subjective one. They are identified by comparing languages. By the *objective* factor we mean the value and semantic significance of natural and cultural realities that define living space stereotypes of a given nation. The *subjective* factor is characterized by the possibility of an optional signification choice of the same realities that are differently presented by the mental stereotypes of different ethno-linguistic communities. In other words, national identity is manifested in different linguistic representations of the same objects of the real or imagined reality. Moreover, these differences are not always culturally marked. And some of these differences can not be connected with the cultural factors. Cp.: 1) *Men do not cry*. Hence from their childhood the boys are told: «You are a man! Be strong, men do not cry! ». 2) *Women are the weaker sex, men are the stronger sex*. 3) All the blondes are foolish or inattentive. Cp. *blonde at the wheel* is an expression which is usually said about the women who dumb out at the wheel. Let us agree with V.G. Gak (1999) that cultural specificity presupposes the words to match the certain mentality stereotype or any item of the objective and cultural space, of nation's history, beliefs, traditions and natural conditions of life. It is in the area of stereotyped mentality of the nation where we should look for the sources of synergy of national and cultural components in the semantic structure of a linguistic sign. As stereotype is understood as the subjectively deterministic representation <...>, which reflects the *objective and axiological attributes of a given object or phenomenon* marked by interpretation of reality in terms of socially relevant cognitive models (see: Bartminsky, 2005; Kikleovich, 2007: 180), then the socio-cultural stereotypes determine the nature of linguistic meanings connotations and create elusive ethno-semantic aura of linguistic sign.

However, the dilution of national and cultural identity is not the only possible interpretation of the «national cultural component of linguistic meaning». Some of the authors explore the phenomenon of cultural identity of the linguistic sign in its multipathing synergy. The basis of this approach is the N.A. Berdyaev's view who considers that the culture has never been and will never be abstractedly human, it is always concretely human, i.e. it is national (Berdyaev, 1997) and it represents a person and value and semantic space of the habitat integrally. This provision is basic for the study of stereotyped organization of ethno-cultural language space. It is believed that everything that can be interpreted in terms of stereotyped axiology belongs to the circle of national language culture. However, some researchers believe that the national identity of the linguistic sign is conditioned only ethnically, i.e. determined by the very fact of belonging to a particular ethnic group.

Thus, the linguo-cultural study of language stereotyping of ethnic and cultural space implies, first of all, an analysis of national specificity of linguistic signs, which is caused by the mechanisms of genetic functional interaction between language and culture. This forms the ethno-linguistic vector of cultural linguistics. The second linguo-cultural direction is related to the study of cultural-semiotic specificity of the linguistic sign. For this purpose, comparative and introspective methods are used. Comparative approach involves comparison with other languages and cultures, as the comparison can help to identify general and specific features of linguistic representations of social and cultural stereotypes. Introspective analysis involves working with informants and the text analysis to identify national and cultural stereotyping of a language. The harmonious combination of introspective and comparative methods in the study of national and cultural stereotypes helps to get away from the full ethnocentrism (Filippova, 2002: 64), when the cultural and linguistic standards, identified in the space of one ethno-cultural community, are attached the status of universals. On the other hand, the combination of research



heuristics data help to avoid the opposite extreme approach, stating the atomic (separate) description of the linguo-cultural content of a word, that is basically impossible without referring to the deep (internal) relations of cultural and linguistic universals and uniques. How much is it important for the studying of the cultural identity of speech forming the language stereotypes of ethnic and cultural space?

Currently, this issue finds different solutions, up to mutually exclusive ones. On the one hand, the nihilistic view on the recognizing the systematic ties between language and culture amplifies, and the concept of cultural and linguistic specificity is recognized bankrupt. On the other hand, admitting total domination of cultural identity of individual languages does not allow the existence of linguo-cultural universals. The analysis of the linguistic reality convinces us that the cultural and linguistic specificity of a linguistic sign, cultural and linguistic universals are not in a relationship of mutual exclusion. They not only coexist, but predict each other. This view is consistent with the statement of Russell that our knowledge of the world and things (in this case it is a question of verbalized knowledge) consists of two types of knowledge: when things are known as specific and when things are known as universals (Russell, 2001: 8). Accordingly, the universal and national-cultural components of the linguistic sign are in complementary relationship to each other. The presence of ethnic and cultural specificity of the language 1) «does not negate» the effect of cultural and linguistic universals, and 2) suggests stereotyping of ethnic and cultural space of the national-linguistic worldview.

### **Culturological potential of figurative speech**

Cultural linguistics (unlike culture-through-language studies characterized by selective, rather illustrative approach to describing cultural realities) aims at a *holistic, systematic presentation of units of language and culture in their correlation and interaction.*

Lexical and phraseological units which have a real prototype in space or in time carry the background knowledge by which linguistic units relate to the cultural facts. Culture-through-language dictionaries and researches describe the concepts and facts of social, economic and cultural life of nations, cultural realities of its history, household, traditions, literature, art, education, etc.

However, cultural linguistics «works» at a deep level of semantics, considering the systematic and integrative approach to the phenomena of language and culture. Correlating meanings of culturally determined units to the domains (codes) of universal or national culture, linguo-cultural analysis gives them deep and bulk explication. As an example, we can analyze a phraseological series with the word *slave* in metaphorically captive meaning: *a slave to passions, a slave to desires, and a slave to habits* (See also «*Slave to Love*» as the name of the movie). The cultural information, which is implicit in these combinations, goes back to a religious discourse and expression *пaб бoжeу* (*servant of God, slave of God*). In a figurative sense the word *a slave* refers to a man's dependence on the character trait or the circumstances, on his lack of freedom. The source of linguo-cultural information may come from the comparison of language systems, where both lexical items and domains offer different division of reality: Rus. *тpaвa* (grass), Germ. *Gras* or *Kraut* (eg., Herb), Rus. *ягoды* (berries; including cherry, bird-cherry), Germ. *Beeren* (but cherry and bird-cherry for the German consciousness mean *Früchte*), Rus. *кocтюм* (costume), Germ. *Anzug* or *Kostüm*.

So, culture-through-language studies, which was originally defined as the linguo-didactical analog or correlate of sociolinguistics, is proposed to be considered as the applied aspect of cultural linguistics, which is vividly acquiring cognitive and semiological character. Recently a new paradigm of linguistic cultural studies arises –

it's cognitive semiological linguoculturology, based on three pillars: cognitive science, semiology and hermeneutics.

In linguistics, the term *hermeneutics* is used in one sense – as a way of comprehension of meaning. In this way the hermeneutics has been determined by its founders (F. Schleiermacher, V. Dilthey: hermeneutics is the art of understanding). The subject of comprehension may be human's inner world, the outside world and the culture of the past (V. Dilthey, later M. Heidegger and H.-G. Gadamer). The introspection is the means of understanding of the inner world (< lat. *intrōspectāre* – literally 'to look inside'), it is the study of consciousness and thinking by the individual themselves during experiencing these processes. The outside world is available to comprehension as well as the objectively existing world is perceivable to humans. From the hermeneutical point of view, the aim of linguoculturology is to interpret the extreme values of culture, as far as we perceive the world through the prism of culture as a set of basic texts. Since the texts are the products of human activity, they appear to reflect the peculiarities of linguistic consciousness as a fundamental category in the philosophy of culture by G.G. Shpet. This serves as the base for the idea that the understanding of the texts should be based on fundamental analysis of the linguistic consciousness (Kuznetsov, 1991), access to which is opened through the word as the culture archetype. Due to the fact that any tradition is inextricably linked to language, expressed by it and determined by it, the object and the source of culture hermeneutics is precisely the language as a means of realization of axiological and cognitive space of a person. The starting position is that it's the language that is alleged in hermeneutics, that is why all interpreted objective and subjective meanings should be taken from language and text (F. Schleiermacher, G. Gadamer). Indeed, the language represents the surrounding world. Without language there can be neither life nor consciousness; neither thinking nor feeling; neither history nor society. Everything connected with the person is reflected in the language. Language is not just a «house of being» (Heidegger), but also a way of human being, its essential property. The language, understood in such way, becomes a condition of cognitive-discursive (cognitive, verbal and cogitative) human activity. As soon as the subject of the humanities is the text, the language remains the main tool for the analysis of anthropomorphic phenomena (primarily cultural phenomena). Many hermeneutic concepts declare the language the centre of all cultural problems, because it is the word that carries culturological function, appearing as a backbone element of culture. As a conclusion, if the word is the principle and the archetype of the culture, then the principles of the word analysis should be consistently extended to the culture analysis. It is necessary to eliminate the structuralist limitations in determining the influence of extralinguistic factors on the word semantic structure. The statement that linguistic facts may be at least partly explained by the facts of *nonlinguistic* nature and not necessarily observed, earlier incompatible with the position of structuralism, has become acceptable. Such phenomena of extralinguistic nature, which are subject to the hypothetical modeling, in cognitive linguistics became the following cognitive structures: a) M. Minsky's *frame* (in linguistics, this structure has got a «permanent residence» due to the works by Charles Fillmore); b) J. Lakoff's idealized *cognitive model*; c) G. Fauconnier's *mental spaces*, etc. However, all these phenomena are inaccessible to direct observation. They become explicated only in the research process of *speech* activity. First of all, one of the basic post-Saussurian linguistic postulates about the language consistency requires to be rethought. *Each language is not so much a static system, fixing the results of the reflection of the external world in the form of its adequate semantic model, as functional and communicative system.* Even in its consistent state the language is a functioning system. In this sense, it is not only the structural and systemic, but (and this is its most important subsistence) dynamic cognitive semiological formation. All this presupposes the search for such a

methodological principle of cultural cognitive research that would adequately reproduce the dialectically complex nature of language as the activity system. To solve this problem it is important to use the concept of discourse correctly. We investigate the *discourse* as a complex cognitive and communicative phenomenon, which includes not only the text but also various extra-linguistic factors (knowledge of the world, opinions, values), which play an important role in understanding and perception of information.

There are two main directions in the linguo-cognitive study of discourse: (a) the structure of knowledge representation and (b) the methods of its conceptual organization. The categorical essence of discourse is sufficiently representatively revealed already by listing its elementary components such as the stated events, the participants of these events, performative information and «non-events», i.e. the circumstances which go along with the events, background and value and semantic opinion of event participants, etc. Value and semantic relations between the conceptual discourse elements get the cognitive-discursive research into a place of linguistics.

The presented definitions allow us to consider the given categories not only as system formations. Being verbal and cognitive categories, they are functional and dynamic components of linguoculture, which indicates that they are binary. On the one hand, they undoubtedly belong to the sphere of cognitive semantics, and, on the other, to the contextual functional semantics, which is the subject of semiology. There is a compelling point of view, according to which the language and discourse are inseparable. At the same time, at the initial stage of their appearance, the distinction of these concepts, which goes back to Saussure (in the form of a pair of «language / speech»), is quite feasible, it gave impetus to the development of semiology as a scientific discipline. However, it is important to dissociate from Saussure's understanding of the semiology as the science of signs in general. The scientist wrote: «... you can imagine the science that studies the life of signs within society life <...> we would call it semiology (Greek. *semeion* 'sign'). It should reveal to us what the signs are and what laws they are governed by...

Linguistics is only the part of the general science» (Saussure, 1977: 54). As we see, Saussure's semiology is a synonym of semiotics. However, we reserve the right to research this subject for semiotics (the study of signs, as Charles W. Morris, its founder, determined), and the branch of linguistics that studies the patterns of use the linguistic signs in the speech and, more broadly, in the discursive activity of human is called semiology. It is important to emphasize that the discursive activity can be carried out only by a complex mechanism of interaction of language and speech. Indeed, the discursive space is regulated in a certain way and interacts with the system of language: *the language flows into the discourse, discourse flows back into the language*. According to the A.-J. Greimas' figurative expression, they are likely to hold onto each other, like the palms during the «chinese burn». The scientist believes that the distinction between language and discourse is in the intermediate step which should be ultimately abdicated.

The semiology was destined to become the work of collecting value and semantic products of language activity – products that are nothing like desires, fears, grimaces, threats, promises, caresses, melodies, frustration and apologize in their ethnocultural perspective, which form the language in action, or discourse activity. We will not deny that this definition suffers from a common personal perception of the language in action. However, it concentrates the essence of the relations between language, discourse and cognition. It is impossible to consider the problems of the relations out of the categories such as value, assessment and sense. Usually the *values* are understood as generated perceptions, the importance of an

object to a subject. With this kind of approach the value is considered as a type of the meaning. For the correct application of the concept of the *value* in linguoculturology the works of S.N. Vinogradov acquire special urgency (2007: 93-95). The scientist defines value as the «ideal formation, which represents the importance (relevance, significance) of objects and phenomena of reality for the society and the individuals and is expressed by various forms of human activity» (Vinogradov, 2007: 93). The expressiveness of a value, the possibility of its physical manifestation recovers its objective essence. A type of the expressiveness is a linguistic expressiveness – language and speech embodiment of people's ideas about values, verbal axiological models, created by a native speaker (Ibid). The simplest examples of such axiological expressiveness are the names of values: goods, truth, justice, freedom, beauty, etc.

The values are hierarchically organized (in each linguoculture there is its own scale of values); they are of historical nature (values may vary), they play a crucial role in the synergy (self-organization) of linguoculture. Along with that, they are sufficiently stable. Only the formation, awareness and acceptance of the new axiological system will finally allow overcoming the crisis in the culture. The value is always associated with the assessment, which is understood broadly as the definition of usefulness, appropriateness, relevance of anything, etc., i.e. as placing the phenomenon or fact on the scale of «good – bad», as a positive or negative attitude towards anything.

The assessment is a form of values existence. The assessment may be (a) *emotional and sensual*, if it is expressed with a single emotion or with the complex of emotions (in the form of admiration and resentment, desire or rejection, love or hatred); (b) *rational and verbal*, if the assessment is given to the significance of the object (in the reviews, utterances, critical articles, expert reports, etc.); (c) *pragmatic and behavioral* (in the form of real action or behavior). For the cultural linguistics the most important are the assessments which are expressed verbally. The value and assessment are related to such linguistic phenomena as semantics, language and speech means of axiological expression, paradigmatic relations that are determined by the patterns of variation and selection of the nominative units (semantic and stylistic synonymy, lexical and phraseological variation, etc.).

Thus, the value and the assessment, being a kind of the ideal, exist objectively, independently of our consciousness. They are associated with the choice of language means, methods of verbal and cogitative activity. The choice is a culturally important area of human activity, or at least it is a necessary part of any linguistic culture. The value and the culture in general are related to the *activity*, and the value plays a constructive role in its mechanism. Indeed, a person always seeks for something or tends to avoid something. At the same time he or she evaluates people around them, the circumstances of life, and their own behavior and then acts on the basis of this assessment.

Supporting the idea that values exist objectively, independently of us, the researcher focuses on the fact that they are not the objects and the phenomena of the world, but their inherent, occasional properties and attributes which are metonymically transferred. If the object gets its designation, it breaks away from the individual or collective subject, who nominated it. Therefore, any domains are values, regardless of whether they mean the value in its ordinary or scientific understanding or not. Almost every word, the author considers, referring to the R.M. Hare, becomes a value during the discursive metaphorical thinking.

So-called «vertical context» (presuppositions) is a condition of any actualization of linguoculturological values. It is the drive belt of the *systematic functional* mechanism of knowledge internalization, ideas and opinions about objective reality, developed by the mankind in terms of an ethnic culture, in the course of their axiological interpretation and modeling of such basic linguo-cultural

categories as the *worldview*, the *conceptual system of the world*, the *model and image of the world*. Each of these categories is a relatively complete and holistic fragment of the global world image, which, in its turn, is a buffer link between the substantive and practical (material) and spiritual (ideal) aspects of our life, serving as a universal means of forming a particular ethno-cultural community. They represent the structure of the special philosophy of the world cognition – the *hermeneutics*, which, unlike the epistemology, does not reveal, but interprets the perceivable reality. The possibility of such structuring of the perceivable world is based on the nature of the fundamental category of cognitive-semiological theory of linguoculture, which, in our view, is the *global world image*. The cognitive semiological structuring of the global world image is based on the already known triple bond between the «subject», the «domain» and the «word», with the only difference that the starting point here is not the «domain» but the «word», which joins together the object and its reflection in our minds (cp.: Kolesov, 2004: 8). With this approach, even universal (panhuman) domains such as «Life», «Death», «Love», «Eternity», «Good», «Evil» are considered in terms of their ethno-cultural understanding, as the word is a product of hermeneutics, a symbolic means of ethno-cultural interpretation of the perceived reality fragment. The global world image is the basis of the subjective world understanding, the result of a systematic spiritual human activity on the acquisition of all the material and practical activities. The subjective image of objective reality of this kind, being the image of the real world, is certainly exposed to the semiotization and objectified by different subsystems of linguistic signs, which interpret the reality in a creative way and put it into the existing system of world perception. As a result, the global image of the world is transformed into the ethno-linguistic worldview with collective linguo-creative efforts of ethno-cultural community. It is true, firstly, due to the different ethnic groups using different means of internalization and semiotization for the opened (the known) world; secondly, each of them already had a previously established system of world perception. In contrast with the conceptual image of the world, which clearly has a dual nature (on the one hand, it is an *element of consciousness*, on the other, it is an *image of the real world* which is not objectified yet), the ethno-linguistic worldview does not only objectify cognitive mind (using not only language semiotic systems), but puts it in the «automatic mode», i.e. into the level of the subconscious. This is achieved, we think, in the course of objectifying the conceptual picture of the world (its denotative-significative image) to the semantic space of natural language.

## Conclusion

The consistency of the language semantics is a reflection of the systemic character of the culture itself, of the world image structure, in terms of which the ethno-linguistic stereotypes are formed.

Sociocultural stereotypes determine the connotative character of linguistic meanings; create the elusive ethno-semantic aura of linguistic signs. Without any doubt, they are related to the internal form of the word, to its semantic motivation. However, despite its elusiveness, the internal form, like the connotation, can be revealed by the speakers in their discourse activity and affect the usage of the word. The internal form is lost if the semantic ties cease to be realized by the native speakers. In the cognitive semiological description the socio-cultural patterns are correlated with the concept of *prototype*, which was for E. Rosch the major concept in modern cognitive psychology. For cognitive semiological linguo-cultural paradigm this concept is valuable because it helps to comprehend the processes of categorization, which largely depend not only on the actual cognitive mechanisms, but also on the cultural and discourse space where a person exists. Rosch's experiments

have shown that each category has an inner structure consisting of the *center* (the prototype) and *periphery*. Accordingly, it can be argued that the socio-cultural stereotype is a standard member of this category, which embodies its most distinctive attributes. Metonymic thinking allows identifying the entire category as a whole by taking into account the prototype, and forming a socio-cultural stereotype.

Ethno-linguistic worldview, being a secondary, derivative formation, is complex, variable, dynamic. Nevertheless, it has a certain invariant skeleton - ethno-linguistic constants that are the part of the consciousness of every ethno-linguistic community member. Due to the ethno-linguistic constants not only understanding of the different individual consciousnesses within the same ethno-linguistic culture is provided, but also the so-called cross-cultural communication is achieved. The latter is carried out due to the categorical properties that are common for the language and the culture. These are, in particular: (1) cultural and linguistic forms of consciousness, reflecting the mindset of the given ethnic group, which (2) are engaged in the dialogue as far as communicants are always the subjects of a certain ethnic culture (subculture). (3) Language and culture have individual and social forms of existence. (4) They are characterized by standard codes, subject to the principle of historicism. Finally, (5) they mutually presuppose each other: the language is the main tool of assimilation of ethnic culture, a form of representation of the national mentality; the culture finds its real life in the language as one of the most important systems of its semiotic incarnation.

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