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Cross-cultural communication in the context of globalization: language and culture nexus

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Abstract.

The purpose of this paper is to consider the relationship between language and culture in the context of globalization as well as the factors that determine the features of cross-cultural communication in this context. Among a number of reasons that have led to the growth of cultural interactions, digitalization plays a special role as it has made possible to establish direct or mediated mass communication contacts of millions of people from different, sometimes even polar cultures. The analysis of the relationship between language and culture in the perspective of mutual influence and interdependence, revealing the relevant mechanism of cross-cultural communication, determines the analysis of interrelated aspects of globalization with an emphasis on the primacy of its linguistic and cultural components. The updated studies of the processes of linguistic and cultural globalization contribute to an adequate understanding of its specifics, the mechanisms of interaction between language and culture, and allows us to negotiate their positive significance in the formation of a modern linguistic and cultural picture of the world.

Keywords:

*linguacultural globalization
cross-cultural communication
cognitive language functions
external culture
internal culture
global culture
global language
world picture*

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The enhanced focus on the nexus between language and culture in the contemporary growth of cultural contacts is linked to emerging new agents of transnational connections thus, to intercultural communication. A specific feature of cross-cultural communication in the context of globalization is the previously unthinkable growth of cultural contacts worldwide. Despite numerous definitions, most scientists understand culture as a set of ideas, values, the patterns of behavior, knowledge, aesthetic preferences, rules and customs shared by individuals of a particular society and learned during socialization and enculturation. This set of cultural representations allows people to form a unique way of life.

Having modern sociological concepts in mind, globalization appears as the development of a universal human culture. In accordance with the ideas of the cross-cultural communication theorists (E. Hall, F.L. Strodbeck and F.R. Klakhon, G. Hofstede et al.), culture is instilled and acquired in early childhood in the process of socialization (enculturation), then consolidated in the minds of people and transmitted from generation to generation through main social institutions operating in every society. Meanwhile, culture is also a very dynamic formation, which is constantly changing by such leverages as innovation, diffusion and acculturation.

Globalization reflects the dynamic dimension of globality. In other words, it represents the processes of involvement of national cultures in a qualitatively new world unity, which by its very nature is transnational and functions beyond the borders of individual states, nations, civilizations having its own, qualitatively specific principles of functioning. Accordingly, cross-cultural communication in the context of globalization is associated with relative identity transformation [1]. At one time, anthropologists have already made great efforts to establish the principle of cultural relativism, according to which, each particular culture should be understood as a whole and studied taking into account its own denotations and meanings.

Another specific feature of cross-cultural communication is the fragmentation and even superficial nature of cultural contacts in the context of globalization. There is a cultural exchange of samples of national cuisine, costumes, fashion trends, consumer habits, souvenirs, entertainment, and

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technical know-hows. Therefore, the researchers of these days underline irrationality of modern society expressed in the loss of connections between phenomena and processes, actions of people and events of social life. Culture acquires a fragmentary nature, which is expressed in the absence of a holistic picture of the world, as well as in deciphering various ideologies, philosophical and religious pictures of the world as autonomous texts devoid of any referents in reality.

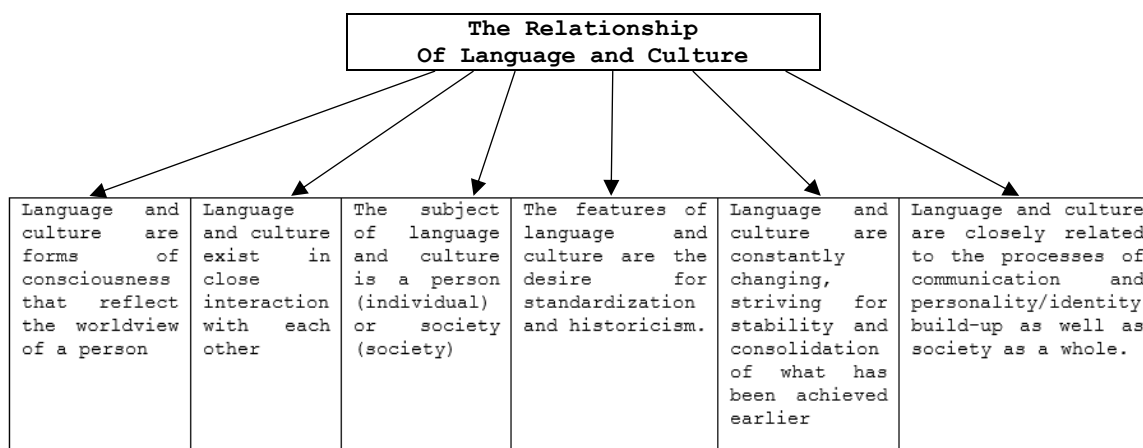
In its turn, global culture spreads through a number of social groups, in various activities, values and norms, lifestyles, the prevailing interests of which are most clearly manifested by their specifically global and transnational nature. In our opinion, the main feature of the modern communication is its mosaic nonlinearity. The global communication space with its freely interacting side-by-side equal realities turns out to be detached from any specific foundation, but in return, it gives the freedom to choose any identity from an array of polyphonic dialects-subcultures. One's own identity in this fundamental multiplicity of realities can be realized as one dialect of many, similar to others and without any aspirations to absolutize. It is this set of realities that gives new humanistic prospects for the mankind to keep developing in the era of globalization.

It should be noted that it is the Internet that is not only the newest and rapidly spreading means of communication, but also the most important factor in the transformation of socio-cultural reality affecting the interaction of languages and cultures. The studies of these transformations are at their early stages of formation and development, however, the first conclusions about the socio-cultural consequences of the influence of the World Information Network can already be drawn. It should be emphasized that it is impossible to talk about intercultural interaction outside of specific historical conditions. There can be no a once and for all established rule on how cultures should interact with each other, while maintaining their specific characteristics. The epistemological stance, namely how intercultural interaction should be understood in the light of its historical variability, can be quite challenging.

Language is one of the most important categories of

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culture since the worldview of a person is formed and expressed through language. However, language is not only a means, it is also the environment in which a person is shaped, moulded and functions, which determines personal life experience. One can even mention that a person lives as if he or she is inside the language, constantly experiencing its influence [2]. Language doesn't just reflect a person's world and culture, but preserves culture and passes it down from generation to generation as it is the most important function of it. Therefore, language plays a decisive role in building and constructing a personality, national character, people, nation. The question of the interaction and interconnection of language and culture is included in the range of many scientific interests to such specialists as culturologists, linguists, philosophers, etc. Undoubtedly, such phenomena as culture and language are closely related. However, it should be highlighted that this relationship is not as simple as it seems at first glance.



Based on the above mentioned, one can draw a conclusion that language is the property of any person because the mass nature of language as a phenomenon is completely natural. Alongside with that, language is an integral part of the culture we inherit, and the main tool for cognition and assimilation of culture. Comprehension of science, religion, literature is possible only through language and by using it.

The language also reflects the national characteristics

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of each nation, its mentality. We believe that language determines the way of thinking of those who speak it. It is believed that every nation has those special key words (most often used in proverbs and sayings) that reflect the spirit of the people. Thus, language is an original system that leaves its mark on the consciousness of people who speak it, and forms their world picture. Accordingly, a lack of linguistic and cultural features of a particular language can become an obstacle in communication. On the other side, knowledge of such language features is not only desirable, but also necessary for communication.

Communication is a complex and multi-faceted process that can act both as a process of interaction of individuals and the attitude of people to each other, and as a process of their mutual influence, empathy and mutual understanding. In general, this is one of the most important factors in human life. Due to its practical significance, communication processes attract the attention of specialists in various fields of humanitarian knowledge: philosophy, psychology, sociology, cultural studies, ethnology, linguistics, etc. At the same time, each science or scientific direction that studies certain aspects of communication allocates its own subject of study in this process.

As it has been repeatedly noted, in connection with the ever-growing mutual influence and interpenetration of languages and cultures of different peoples, international communication currently occupies one of the important positions in social life. It is generally recognized that representatives of each particular culture, being carriers of a certain national culture, share the qualities of consciousness that had been formed in the development of a certain national culture.

Throughout the course of its historical development, language is directed to the realm of the internal culture – “Language is a living organism or system, it acts as a tool to translate deep structures into superficial ones, or a mirror of consciousness, a depot of experience, or a shell full of meanings” [3]. Each of these definitions has the right to exist since it highlights one of the sides of the language. It is impossible not to notice that if earlier scientists

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were mainly concerned with how language is arranged, the contemporary questions about the language are focused on how it is connected to the human world, how dependent a person is on language, how communication determines the choice of linguistic means.

The ability of the language to switch from the internal culture to the external and vice versa, depending on the communicative needs, is ensured by the flexibility of the cultural orientation of the linguistic units. Words are differently oriented to the cultural world of different peoples, while several different cultural denotations are distinguished:

- neutral vocabulary without any cultural denotation;
- lexical units denoting phenomena similar to all cultures;
- lexical units denoting phenomena specific to a given culture;
- lexical units denoting specific foreign cultural phenomena or realities.

Naturally, language is mostly used in the orientation towards its internal culture. However, no people can live in cultural isolation, and any language in a greater or lesser degree is used in various communicative situations related to external cultures. The cross cultural communication term assumes at least two or more cultures interaction by breaking language and cultural barriers. The growing interest in the peculiarities of cross-cultural communication is contributed to a new scientific field in which the dialogue of various cultures is considered an object of study. The language's appeal to external culture is the result of intercultural communication and its escape into the field of external cultures occurs in a number of typical situations: newspapers, magazines, household contacts, special linguistic and cultural literature, etc.

With the developing cross-cultural processes in terms of the cultural approaches in the background, culture is considered as a dominant feature of social life, which transforms society and the environment and becomes a factor of modern life and a source of innovation. Such a view of culture has led to the emergence of a new worldview paradigm

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- cultural centrism, which insists on assessing the world from the position of a certain culture [4]. Therefore, it is not surprising that in the perspective of interdisciplinary research associated with globalization, attention is focused on changes in culture, which, in turn, is closely coupled with changes in language. It is fundamentally important for the issue in question to discover the primacy of the linguistic and cultural components of globalization in relation to the economical, informational, political and other aspects of this phenomena. In this regard, most of the leading experts in the field of globalism emphasize the prerogative of culture within the framework of globalization.

Thus, the nexus of language and culture seems to be the core for us as human beings. Considering globalization in an interactive context contributes to the solution of the "language-culture" problem by many other sciences: cultural studies, socio-linguistics, cognitive linguistics, linguo-culturology, ethnolinguistics and cultural anthropology, philosophy of culture, philosophy of language in addition to linguistics. The methods are centered around the semantic core of "language and culture". In the focus of the interdisciplinarity, the tenet of V. von Gum Boldt can serve as a postulate: "Culture manifests itself in the language from the standpoint of the philosophy of language based on linguistic apriori, which represents a mechanism capable of ordering the cultural chaos of a particular people. At the same time, language carries not only pronounced rational structures, but also contains coded and anonymous structures of perception (cultural stereotypes, behavioral practices and norms). Therefore, language apriori are the conditions to generate culture as a rationally organized formation. Moreover, language affects the content of the individual thinking and the national mentality as a whole. The representatives of specific nations and ethnic groups, knowing the code of their own language, are able to decode the cultural content inherent in it, perceive it and get a feel for it" [5].

We believe that the cognitive and communicative function of language is found in the ability to enhance the cognitive capabilities of a person, to influence his or her

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consciousness through the knowledge of culture. Such a methodological attitude to the role of language can mean that the understanding of culture can be achieved only through study and acquisition of language. This stance is confirmed by the fact that it is impossible to fully comprehend another culture without access to its language when considering the relationship between language and thought as well as the correlation of language and culture because “knowledge... of languages serve as an important tool to understand the customs and beliefs of the people” [6]. Having this cognitive background, the postulate of F. Boas is developed in the works of E. Sapir and B. Whorf as both scholars agree on the parallel nature of the language and culture structures by noting that language as an aspect of culture in its perfect form has been a prerequisite for the development and knowledge of culture as a whole.

Among a plethora of existing concepts to depict the interaction of language and culture and the importance of this interaction to understand culture, we can relate to the position of the French anthropologist C. Lévi-Strauss, who considers language “as a foundation designed to establish the structures corresponding to the culture considered in its various aspects” [7]. If most other theories consider language as a “product” or an aspect of culture, the theory of Lévi-Strauss considers language and its threefold nature in the context of the nexus with culture. Language acts as a product of culture having common culture of all the people, as one of its elements, as a condition of culture developed by means of logical relations depending on the degree of similarity of these categories. The cognitive and communicative interdependence of culture and language, its understanding as one unity with the system is increasingly emphasized in the interdisciplinary research of numerous scientists. Language as a cognitive tool of culture traditionally presents itself as the main factor in the formation of personality through culture. It serves as a repository where the coded information containing that socio-cultural experience is accumulated. Therefore, one can say that language is the sphere of being through which a person learns about the world and culture. According to Lévi-Strauss “Language and culture are two

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parallel varieties of activity relating to a deeper layer" [8]. As D. Petrov states it, "this layer is a mental or spiritual aspect, " some human spirit", "spiritual cosmos", "the world of an individual", which "has no basis in anything other than man" [9].

Modern scientists have recently turned to the well-known axiom of W. Humboldt, which states that "language is not a result, but an activity" [10]. Under the "activity" term in this case, we can understand the cognitive activity in the process of cross-cultural communication, in which the language, performing its cognitive and communicative function, acts as an instrument of cognition. The cognitive impact of language on culture as a type of activity is also considered in the concept of rational cognition. An extremely important quality of language seems to us to be its mobility, which determines the ability to construct new facets of world picture and thereby emphasizes its cognitive aspect. The cognitive process is becoming today a productive way of achieving efficiency in new types of communication. As language researchers mention, the cognitive function of language, while applying its cognitive communication competence in foreign cultures, keeps records of the mental results of the communication. In other words, it is the cognitive language function that provides the implicit organization and orientation of a person in modern objective reality and, while the purely communicative function works to implement the external aspects in the construction of socio-cultural ties.

In the context of objective globalization, the nexus of language and culture is a cognitive communication tool designed to integrate the world community. Also, under the linguistic and cultural globalization, we propose to understand an objectively conditioned cross-border process of mutual penetration of linguistic and cultural processes, actualizing the need for mutual understanding, knowledge of cultures and leading to some global culture and a global language under the influence of common globalization processes.

The research interest in identifying the specifics of the nexus of language and culture in the context of globalization

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within the linguistic and cultural projection is due to the aspirations to unlock its positive potential: new resources and opportunities of language and culture that contribute to the adaptation of the individual and society to general civilizational processes in new conditions.

The linguistic aspect of globalization is reflected in the emergence of the main global language, also called the universal language of worldwide communication. Currently, the global language is English. The cultural aspect of globalization is associated with the emerging phenomenon of global culture, the product of globalization, which is a symbolic phenomenon of "unity in multitude". As a phenomenon, globalization of modern society is an evolving process. It is possible to assimilate its positive opportunities and mitigate its negative consequences only through consistent cross-cultural and interdisciplinary interaction.

On the basis of the foregoing, it can be concluded that it is culture and language are the foundation of the universal world order shaping the environment for interpersonal socio-cultural relations. At the same time, the global language acts at the global level as a mechanism for meaningful cognitive communication allowing interpenetration of cultures in the event that it is objectively conditioned and does not fraught with the danger of assimilation. It also confirms the thesis that the processes of globalization are an intensive interpenetration of the linguistic elements, the quintessence of which is continuous interchange and intercorrelation. It should be noted that interpenetration does not mean unification at all, but rather implies an objectively determined tendency to realize national identity in terms of transcultural interconnectedness.

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