

Conference Paper

Language Variability As a Factor of Variety of Cultures

Rtischeva O.V.

Kemerovo State Institute of Culture, Kemerovo, Russia

Abstract

The article considers the issues of language variability and interrelation between language and culture, which are in the continuous interaction. The author observes the linguistic and philosophical concepts of W. Humboldt, L. Weisgerber, E. Sapir and B. Whorf. Moreover, the author describes the mechanisms of language variability and their peculiar features which are shown throughout the cultural traditions of the nation.

Keywords: language, culture, interrelation, language variability, outlook, consciousness, national and cultural specifics.

Corresponding Author:

Rtischeva O.V.

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1. Introduction

An important factor in the development of any society is interaction and interrelation of language and culture. This statement was briefly and most accurately illustrated by S. G. Ter-Minasova, "language as a means of communication of people and the culture of the society formed with its help are in indissoluble connection and continuous interaction, which determines their development" [4, 17]. The existence of culture regardless of the language is impossible, because language forms its foundation. Through language, symbols, norms, customs, beliefs, scientific knowledge and modes of behaviour, ideas, feelings, values, and attitudes are transmitted and recorded. Language is the repository of national culture and transmits cultural treasures from generation to generation.

2. Methodology

The research is based, first of all, on the historical-comparative method, which allows the analysis of the evolution of society in the context of the development of language and culture. Linguistic and cultural method assists in determining the interaction and relationship between the language and culture of different societies. The analysis and synthesis as the methods makes it possible to fix and consider different norms, customs,

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symbols, beliefs, ideas and values, without which the development of language and culture is impossible.

3. Discussion

The first researcher who endeavoured to solve the problem of the relationship between language and culture was V. Humboldt. In his linguo-philosophical works, he mentioned that the national character of the language determines the nature of thinking and outlook of the people, i.e. the difference in worldviews is due to the difference in languages. His successor L. Weisgerber proceeded with the idea that language imposes a certain segmentation of reality on the minds of the people. Further, the problem became a source for the study at E. Sepir and B. Worf's school. According to their hypothesis of linguistic relativity, people see the world differently, the world is reflected in language and, therefore, language determines the way of man's thinking and behavior. But no matter in what plane this problem is considered, it is obvious that a person is a bearer of language and culture, who recognizes and perceives the world through the senses, creating his ideas about the world on this basis. These arguments allow concluding that the language can reflect the cultural and national mentality of the man who speaks the language.

The national and cultural specificity of the language is reflected in the literary language and its linguistic norm. The variants of the literary language are dual: these are the characteristics of the literary language up to a certain point, and the peculiar features inherent in the region in which the literary language is widespread. "The fact of acquisition of national and cultural specificity is universal. Perhaps this is due to the fact that the variant of the literary language has several tasks: first, it serves as a means of communication; secondly, the knowledge of the people about the world, perceived through the prism of the mentality of this people, is transmitted through language. This provides the formation of the culture of this ethnic group, which also has a dual nature: universal knowledge, meaningful through specific national standards." [2, 127]. In this regard, it should be emphasized that literary language can exist in several variants if it is used outside the country as a means of communication. There are many languages in the world that are national in several countries, and consequently they acquire national and cultural specificity. The specificity of a particular culture is manifested when considering the available language options.

The mechanisms of language change are determined by both linguistic and non-linguistic factors. In a broad sense, variability refers to any changeability and modification, and within this meaning, there is no opposition of the variant to the invariant. In a narrower sense, variability is defined as “a characteristic of the synchronized mode of existence and functioning of language units” [3, 31]. Here one can consider the dichotomy of “variant-invariant”, where the invariant acts as an abstraction, the carrier of the characteristics of the class, and the distraction from the set of options specifically implemented. Variability is characteristic of units of different levels: lexical, morphological, phonological, etc.

Modern linguistics considers variability as an objective immanent property of the language system, affecting all subsystems and units in terms of form and content, synchronically and diachronically, as well as intrasystem relations and relations “language - external world”. Variability always indicates the presence of the ability to change, and verbally it is most clearly manifested in linguistic expression [1, 11]. The most striking example of language variability is English. This is primarily due to territorial (including regional) and social factors. The spread of the English language outside Great Britain became possible following the colonial expansion of England in the XVII-XIX centuries, and that led to the emergence of some distinctive language features, predominantly in vocabulary. Currently, globally there are a large number of the variants of the English language. However, not all of them have a literary form. The variants of the English language having a literary form include: British, Irish, Scottish, Canadian, Australian, New Zealand, and American variants of the English language. According to A. Shveitser, from the functional point of view, the regional variants of the English language serve the spheres occupied by the literary language (culture, science, journalism and fiction) [5, 15].

And if one speaks about different variants of the English language, then by right the British version is the parent of all existing options. The American variant differs from the British one owing to the fact that its development was influenced by different cultures and language norms of their representatives. As for the Canadian version of the English language, it is in the interim position between the British and American variants. This is because the culture and the English language in Canada were strongly influenced by both the British and the American variants during its development.

4. Results

The deeper our knowledge about the patterns of functioning and development of language, the more we strengthen the idea that the variation of the language system is its normal organic state, as “each language changes in time and space” [7, 38]. Even in the truly monolingual countries (and they are very few), the communicative situation is quite sensitive and is characterized by the presence of linguistic varieties. In this regard, V. N. Yartseva mentions that “territorial, social, professional, genre-stylistic differentiation is typical for any language” [6, 213].

The analysis of the distinctive features of the language variant is an interesting task, because through a certain language version researchers can reveal the spiritual values of the people and to understand its cultural heritage. All of the above applies to the variants of any literary language that can be used outside its territory. The peculiarity of the variants is manifested in the fact that they are a continuation of the traditions built into the culture of the people - the main native speaker of the language, but have relative independence and develop in accordance with their own internal and external factors of influence [2, 129].

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