

The Problem of the Community of Partners' Consciousnesses in the Process of Cross-Cultural Communication

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Abstract: In this article, the problem of community of consciousnesses of cross-cultural communication partners is reviewed; the ground for the necessity of a dialog of consciousnesses for achieving mutual understanding of partners is proved by means of analyzing situations of cross-cultural communication. With this purpose, peculiarities of linguistic and cognitive consciousness of communicants are identified, the interdependence of mental content and linguistic form, which objectifies the image of consciousness, is stated. The causes, which lead to inconsistency of images of partners' consciousnesses, representatives of various linguocultural communities (inappropriateness of language, nonverbal means, communication postulates, life style, national character, cognitive dissonance phenomena resulting in psychological discomfort), are characterized. Cases of cognitive dissonance occurrence are reviewed, which take place during the collision of communication tactics of representatives of different linguocultural communities, expression of emotional features (aggression) by them because of conflicts arising in the process of nonverbal cross-cultural communication. Methods are suggested for forming community of partners' consciousnesses (materialization of the process of meanings' attribution, application of various strategies of achieving the state of readiness for cross-cultural communication, teaching through role-plays, social and psychological training). To analyze the problem of community of partners' consciousnesses in the process of cross-cultural communication, cross-disciplinary research principles are used, such as cognitive, cross-disciplinary and anthropocentric principles as well as the principle of multilevel approach to the semantics of linguistic units, the principle of studying language as a cognitive ability and also specific methods of cognitive linguistics and psychology.

Key words: Linguistic consciousness • Cognitive consciousness • Mutual understanding • Images of consciousness • Cross-cultural competence • Strategies • Role-plays • Social and psychological training

INTRODUCTION

One of the insufficiently considered problems of cross-cultural communication is the issue of interaction and mutual understanding of partners in terms of opposite dialog of consciousnesses [1, 8]. Therefore, E.F. Tarasov directly interrelates the issues of cross-cultural communication with the peculiarities of linguistic consciousness of partners, proving that the community of linguistic consciousnesses is a prerequisite for verbal communication; insufficiently community of consciousnesses is the main cause of

communicative conflicts, i.e. conflicts based on partners' incomprehension of each other, which is a consequence of their belonging to different cultures. Cross-cultural communication is a particular case of consciousness functioning in abnormal (pathologic) conditions when no optimal community of communicants' consciousnesses exists [1, 30].

Inappropriateness of communicants' consciousnesses during cross-cultural communication is a result of the fact that linguistic consciousness of individuals, being a world image of a certain culture mediated by the language, i.e. a complex of perceptual,

conceptual and procedural knowledge of culture-bearers about the objects of the real world [2, 5, 6], has ethnocultural specificity. Therefore, the present article deals with the causes of inconsistency of images of cross-cultural communication partners' consciousnesses and suggests methods of accumulating cross-cultural experience.

In order to analyze the inappropriateness of the partners' consciousness and explain the causes of their occurrence, we selected the cognitive approach, which allows to treat a language as a form of consciousness and mentality of a person. Within the framework of the approach, principles and methods of cognitive linguistics and psychology unveiling the specific features of ethnocultural consciousness of partners are used in the article. Such principles include cross-disciplinary, anthropocentric and multilevel principles of studying a language as a cognitive ability of a person. According to N.N. Boldyrev, cognitive linguistics extensively uses: 1) the cross-disciplinary principle, which includes *using data of other sciences* within the cognitive linguistics; 2) the principle of studying language as a cognitive ability, which is determined by recognizing the central role of a human in cognitive processes and speech activity, i.e. anthropocentrism of a language; 3) the principle of multilevel approach to the semantics of linguistic units, which requires studying the language semantics within the context of other cognitive structures [3, 26].

The cross-disciplinary method is extensively used in the process of describing consciousness as a psychocognitive phenomenon, which is objectified through linguistic structures and characterized by ethnocultural specificity, as in this case data of psychology, cognitive linguistics, glossology and culturology are used. The anthropocentric principle materializes at describing a language as a form of consciousness and mentality of a human, which allows to state that it is the human, being a representative of some certain linguocultural community, plays an important role in the accumulation of sociocultural experience and knowledge, which determine the ethnocultural specificity of the consciousness.

Methods of analysis of ethnocultural specificity of linguistic consciousness and of providing mutual understanding of partners during cross-cultural communication include conceptual analysis, strategies and tactics, role-plays, social and psychological training.

At cross-cultural communication, the ethnocultural specificity of partner's consciousnesses is seen, firstly, in the inconsistency of consciousness images of different

nations due to relativity of cultures of different linguocultural communities. Though main cultural standards are universal, their cultural scenarios do not coincide as well as background and procedural knowledge about them and stereotypes. Secondly, mental images of linguistic signs, which objectify the consciousness, do not coincide, either, as the mindset of different ethnic groups and their mentality have different national peculiar features. Thirdly, the linguistic signs themselves are *ethnocentric* [4] and *non-verbal communication means are specific, too* [5].

H. Gosh in his work named the following spheres of cross-cultural lack of confidence, which encumber communication: nonverbal communication; verbal communication; symbols; behavioral standards, customs, practices; social institutions and social roles; attitude to time; cognitive style, way of thinking; systems of beliefs and value priorities; image of the world and image of a human, which have established in the given linguoculture [6].

During the process of cross-cultural communication, various obstacles for mutual understanding arise:

- subconscious expectation of similarity instead of difference between cultures;
- ethnocentrism;
- stereotypes with respect the communication partner;
- different interpretation of nonverbal behavior [7], [8].

During cross-cultural communication, partners can suffer cultural shock [9]; sometimes, discursive styles' inappropriateness takes place [10].

In order to determine the common and the special features in the images of the individuals' consciousness, the content of which directly depends on the scope of assimilated culture, it is necessary to keep in mind that the linguistic consciousness is understood as "verbalized images of consciousness, which form the integral picture" [2, 4].

Any states of consciousness are to be expressed with language. It is the language that according to A. Brudny is able to transmit ideas during communication, due to sensual perception of words; language requires understanding "and this requirement is practicable as its semantic sphere is indivisible from human psyche" [11]. Consciousness is at the same time determined as a cognitive and linguistic phenomenon, in which the cognitive consciousness is oriented to the mental representation of knowledge on the world objects in the form of models, schemes, frames, where the linguistic consciousness objectifies mental notions.

Along with that, linguistic consciousness is a part of national social consciousness; therefore, we can refer to its ethnocultural specificity, which is a consequence of expressing images of ethnic culture as a property of a specific ethnos represented by its individual representatives and individual groups. Images of consciousness are ethnocentric and languages, too, have national specificity, objectifying results of cognitive perception of the reality in its mental form.

Ethnocentricity of consciousness materializes in a situation of cross-cultural communication, when partners have inappropriate sociocultural experience, different views on life pattern and behavior standards. E.g., "An old woman passed the shed with two buckets and a shoulder-yoke. The guest rushed to her and picked one of the buckets. – Would you let me fetch it? The old woman gave a gape at the tall guest but did not let the bucket go. - Let me do it, I'll be soon. The old man laughed. - What's up with you? Women fetch water. The whole village will be laughing at our expense" [12, 23].

The ethnocentricity of various languages is determined by influence of various factors, including: 1) the factor of selectiveness of reflection; 2) the factor of various classification and conceptualization of the world with various nations (total and fractional fragmentation of the world in the languages of various people, which leads to occurrence of various denotative holes), which results in misunderstanding. Compare:

"Drongo bended over the killed man and told the cook:

- You stay here. Tell me, is it a professional blow? Professional blow?
- I did not kill him, - answered the fat guy confusedly, as he did not understand the English expression" [13, 425].

The cognitive dissonance resulting in cross-cultural conflicts is observed in cases when conceptual interaction is interrupted. The problems of such interaction include: 1) structural conformance of conceptual systems of communicants; 2) substantial correspondence of these systems; 3) appropriateness of the estimation of the interlocutor's conceptual system; 4) the extent of mastering collective knowledge and language experience; 5) correspondence of principles and mechanisms of forming and understanding the meanings used by the communicants [14, 39].

Cognitive dissonance is a state of psychological discomfort [15], which is observed in case of unfamiliarity

with communication tactics and postulates. For example, passion and emotional outbursts are typical of the Russian consciousness. Under the stress of emotions, a Russian person, according to U.E. Prokhorov and I.A. Sternin, can easily abstract himself of rational analysis, sober estimate of one's actions and sometimes even ignores the life instinct [16,110]. Representatives of the Russian and Kazakh linguocultures express verbal aggression and emotions during communication process by discharging negative emotions at another person, raising voice and misusing words. E.g.: "Do not await any gifts from me now; you are going to groan tomorrow - you have only yourself to blame! If you do not collect money - I will take your last milch cow, crock and give it to the authorities" [17, 120]. "And where is the house? And the military establishment? And money?" - Zykov waltzed into him angrily, - "We must have cut your hands off when you started playing cards and fiddling about. Tell me, right?" "That's right", agreed Kishkin" [18, 58]. The Englishmen are typically moderate at communication and control their emotions.

Commonly, politeness in communication of the Russians is weaker than in Western countries and Japan, as in Japanese ethics the importance of polite behavior of members of the same group is emphasized [19, 23]. E.g.: "I am glad to see you again, too, Mr. Loxton. But, if it is not too much trouble for you, please call me Goemon, not Gou, though we, the Japanese, feel much more comfortable when called by surname. Thank you, I would not like coffee" [20, 117]. Territorial integrity, keeping distance also differ during cross-cultural communication. The Russians and the Kazakhs keep close distance trying to establish trust-based relations and soften the meaning of what is being said. Patting on one's back, stroking one's hand, looking into one's eyes and face allows to demonstrate friendly attitude. Compare: "I offer him a chair and he offers me a chair; and at that we keep slightly stroking each other across our waists, touching buttons as if we are afraid to burn our fingers" [21, 121].

The Japanese, just like the Germans and the British, keep a more remote distance. H. Morsbach in his book *Customs and Etiquette of Japan* wrote: "During a conversation, the Japanese usually stay at a farther distance from their interlocutor than it is common for western countries. Even if you feel uncomfortable and estranged, do not come too close" [19, 16].

In British sociocultural community, the most valued properties are privacy and keeping distance from the interlocutor. The British do not let the interlocutor come too close to them. Therefore, the English language has a

lot of set expressions regarding the distance: to keep one's distance; to keep somebody at a distance; out of distance from; to keep somebody in his place.

In order to form a community of consciousnesses, it is necessary to focus on the creation of common meaning, which would be understood by communicants. This requires implementation of the process of meaning attribution, i.e. assigning a meaning, through which a word in another language is included in the consciousness of the partner, as, according to A.B. Ufimtseva, the *image-sign* ratio is culturally determined as an image of consciousness associated with the word – it is one of many attempts to describe meanings used by communicants at producing and perceiving voice messages. And a name (word, body of a sign) is a cultural frame, which is imposed on the individual experience of each person who passed socialization in a certain culture. To name means to assign a particular meaning; and to assign a particular meaning means to understand and include in one's consciousness.

To our opinion, in order to remove differences of ethnocultural consciousnesses of communicants, it is necessary to improve the cross-cultural competence of the trainees and help them master the cross-cultural experience. Therefore, during the process of forming readiness of the trainees for cross-cultural communication, it is necessary to apply strategies of accumulating experience of cross-cultural communication. Within the framework of these strategies, such tactics can be applied as role-plays and social and psychological training. Role-play is situation modeling, in which the participants are suggested to play the role of cross-cultural communication partners. This is the sphere, where role-plays are successfully used for changing the behavior of partners and interrelation of people. Thus, in order to acquire cross-cultural experience, we can recommend the Cross-Cultural Communication role-play. According to the role expectation, the Russian is less polite, does not follow the rules of etiquette, can use impolite forms of addressing and answering and the Japanese stays polite in any communication situation, does not forget to thank and bows.

Partner₁ (the Russian): Hey, show me where the restaurant serving sushi is.

Partner₂ (the Japanese) (bowing): thank you for applying to me for explanation. The sushi restaurant is across the street near the museum.

Partner₁ (the Russian) (suspiciously): Why are you bowing? It is not common for us - just answer and that's all. And we bow to our bosses. You aren't my boss, are you? I'll teach you what is what!

Partner₂ (the Japanese): Excuse me, Sir. Bowing is just the polite manner of behavior. Politeness for us is a behavior of etiquette.

Discussion of the role-play results shows that people trained in the process of cross-cultural communication experience accumulation perceive the knowledge of politeness and courtesy rules, rules of keeping personal territory and come to a conclusion that unmannerly and aggressive behavior is not acceptable.

The social and psychological training with the purpose of cross-cultural competence development includes two stages: 1) getting the group ready (warm up, labialization); 2) purpose-oriented training of knowledge and skills.

Stage one: warm up in a situation of cross-cultural communication is arranged according to the following scheme: 1) acquaintance; 2) collection of information on expectations and problems; 3) introduction of cross-cultural postulates of communication.

Acquaintance with a partner speaking another language is the main problem in cross-cultural communication, as the second partner does not know anything about him, while he should know the sociocultural history of the partner, his views, habits and beliefs in order to form an opinion on him. Information on expectations and problems in a situation of cross-cultural communication includes such issues as occurrence of cross-cultural conflicts or cultural shock. Therefore, it is necessary to form cross-cultural competence. To do it, it is necessary to cause motivation to learning with the trainees through understanding of their incompetence in cross-cultural communication. As a teaching suggestion in this case, we can recommend a role-play, which assumes that the trainees get into the characters of cross-cultural communication partners. The control stage is implemented during the role-play, which allows to cover aspects of cross-cultural behavior and interaction of partners as well as to check how well the players (partners and partners) have recognized the lack of cross-cultural knowledge and the necessity to improve it, when playing during the training.

Finally, we note that in the process of studying the problem of community of consciousnesses of cross-cultural communication partners it was determined that: cross-cultural communication partners have inappropriate linguistic consciousnesses: it was proven that the existence of various conflicts is a consequence of cross-cultural incompetence; various conflict situations were shown during the cross-cultural communication; methods and strategies of forming cross-cultural competence in communication were suggested. Thus, inappropriateness

of linguistic consciousnesses of partners is connected with cross-cultural incompetence; therefore, in order to achieve mutual understanding, it is necessary to improve the cross-cultural competence of the interlocutors using various methods and strategies of its formation.

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