

**TILTM 2020****Topical Issues of Linguistics and Teaching Methods in Business and Professional Communication****THE PHENOMENON OF SYNCHRONICITY AS A MEANS TO INCREASE MOTIVATION IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE LEARNING**

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***Abstract***

Increasing students' motivation is essential in foreign language teaching. In the didactic process, it can be achieved by addressing synchronistic phenomena – acausal coincidences of various kinds. In this way, teaching a foreign language can be enriched with new subjects of interdisciplinary significance. The purpose of the study is to determine the significance of the phenomenon of synchronicity as an object in the study of Russian as a foreign language. The paper also aims to develop typology of synchronistic coincidences in reality. The available data regarding synchronistic coincidences suggest using the methods of observation, comparison, and interpretation. Also under these conditions, the comparative method will play an important role. Finally, based on the analytical method, it is possible to identify a set of semiotic realizations of synchronistic coincidences. In this way, synchronistic coincidences will be considered in a cognitive perspective. The paper shows, first of all, the reality of the phenomenon of synchronistic coincidences. They constitute a fact of reality that a person is aware of. An important aspect of the work is also the fact that it presents the types of synchronistic coincidences and their varieties. Under these conditions, cultural phenomena representing synchronic coincidences were determined. These are prophetic dreams, prophecies, signs and omens, etc. The data presented allow us to conclude that by referring to the phenomenon of synchronicity, the methodology of foreign language teaching will be enriched with new objects and will gain interdisciplinary significance.

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## 1. Introduction

One of the key tasks that need to be addressed in the context of teaching a foreign language is to increase students' interest in the studied material boosting their motivation for mastering various aspects of language learning: grammar, vocabulary, cultural and historical components, and the conditions of translating senses from one language system to another – increases (Batunova & Berezina 2017). The phenomenon of synchronicity is among those stimulants that enhance students' interest thus encouraging deeper and more intensive mastering of a foreign language.

Explaining the phenomenon of synchronicity, Jung (1997) wrote:

*I chose this term because the simultaneous occurrence of two meaningfully but not causally connected events seems to me an essential criterion. I am therefore using the general concept of synchronicity in the special sense of a coincidence in time of two or more causally unrelated events which have the same or similar meaning, in contrast to “synchronism,” which simply means the simultaneous occurrence of two events. (pp. 217-218)*

As one example illustrating such coincidences, Jung cited a case when during a conversation with a patient telling him about a golden scarab – a costly piece of jewellery – she was given in a dream, a scarab-shaped beetle, or common chafer (*Cetonia aurata*), flew into the room. Its yellow-green color resembled the color of gold (Jung, 1997, pp. 186-187).

## 2. Problem Statement

It is important to note that, with Jung, the essential boundaries of synchronicity are blurred. For example, this phenomenon deals with temporally fully coincident pairs of events. For this, Jung gives an example with birds: one of his patients' wife told him that at the time of her grandmother's and then her mother's deaths, many birds were gathering outside the room window. Even later, at the time of her husband's death, a flock of birds also sat on the roof of their house.

When a person's special mental state and a corresponding objective event coincide, some meaningful differences may also occur. Jung illustrated this situation with a dream J.W. Dunne<sup>1</sup> had had. Dunne dreamed that he was standing on an island that he knew to be imminently threatened by a catastrophic volcanic eruption which, Dunne realized, could kill four thousand islanders. In his dream, the thought sounded in his head all the time: “Four thousand people will die if ...”. A few days later, he received a copy of the Daily Telegraph with a note saying that the Mount-Pelée volcano had erupted on the island of Martinique killing 40,000 people. The death toll in Dunne's dream and the actual death toll varied by one order of magnitude.

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<sup>1</sup> The English philosopher John William Dunne left his mark on the history of philosophy of the 20<sup>th</sup> century as the creator of a new model of multidimensional time. Having studied the phenomenon of precognitive dreams, he came to the conclusion that there is a fourth dimension in which a person can travel into the future in his/her dream. Dunne's interdisciplinary approach combining the fundamentals of psychoanalysis and theoretical physics defines his role as a founder of philosophical thought of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. His role in the global intellectual history is substantiated in the work of J.L. Borges.

Finally, it is important to note that synchronistic events can take the form of "symbolic parallels". In this regard, Jung suggests activation of a certain principle of "archetypal symbolism" (Jung, 1997, pp. 215-216). So, according to Jung, birds as harbingers of death can be seen as figurative representatives of the deep (archetypal) thoughts about the soul.

Thus, the phenomenon of synchronicity is fairly diverse – the fact unfailingly arousing great interest due to the "exoticism" of its varieties. However, these varieties need to be defined within a more rigorous framework, which could make it possible to reach a deeper and more precise understanding of the phenomenon.

### **3. Research Questions**

Synchronistic coincidences rather rigorously fall into categories according to four basic principles: 1) distribution in time, 2) sign embodiment, 3) functional orientation, 4) objectivity or subjectivity. In fact, this list is characterized as incomplete. To restore this completeness, three key questions have to be answered. What types of synchronistic coincidences do exist? What are the boundaries of the phenomenon of synchronicity? How synchronic coincidences manifest themselves in cultural reality?

### **4. Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the study is to develop typology of synchronistic coincidences in reality. The paper also aims to determine the significance of the phenomenon of synchronicity as an object in the study of Russian as a foreign language.

### **5. Research Methods**

The available data regarding synchronistic coincidences suggest using the methods of observation, comparison, and interpretation. Also, under these conditions, the comparative method will play an important role. Finally, based on the analytical method, it is possible to identify a set of semiotic realizations of synchronistic coincidences. In this way, synchronistic coincidences will be considered in a cognitive perspective.

### **6. Findings**

From the point of view of their distribution in time, synchronistic events take the form of providence – verbally formulated knowledge of events that are concurrent with the act of speech, but spatially distant from the speaker and inaccessible for his/her direct perception (see Berestnev, 2011). Cf.:

*There was a year when, due to the hot, waterless summer, forests and peat bogs burned in the Moscow Region. The old nun Olga Moscovskaya (whose worldly name was Maria Ivanovna Lozhkina, 1871-1973) said one day this summer: "All the soldiers fell into peat and burned. Let's pray for them!" A few days later the news came that the soldiers putting out the forest fires had burned down in a peat bog ... (Devyatova, 2009, p. 42)*

The temporal interval between correlating, if not simultaneous, events is not only subjectively assessed as more or less significant, but is, in fact, important. The synchronistic connection between events in such cases is determined by their substantive relations. It is important to note that such a connection is "vectoral" in nature: it is directed towards the future or is linking the "present" of the initial event to the future or to the projection of the future to the past. Synchronous coincidences of this kind include, on the one hand, the phenomena of *déjà vu* (already seen), *déjà vécu* (already experienced), *déjà éprouvé* (already tried and tested), etc.; on the other hand, they comprise various predictions and prophecies formulated on their basis.

From the point of view of their symbolic embodiment, synchronistic coincidences fall into two types – intra- and inter-code ones. Further, depending on the code they base on, their specific varieties are distinguished.

Intra-code synchronous coincidences are distinguished by the fact that they have the same symbolic embodiment. Such coincidences can be realized in the numerical sphere; they can be traced at the language level in terms of the interaction of proper names and common nouns (common names of objects). Coincidences of real events provide very vivid examples. Cf.: the coincidence of numerical data and proper names in the lives of US presidents Abraham Lincoln and John F. Kennedy.

*Abraham Lincoln was born in 1818; John F. Kennedy was born in 1918 (100 years difference).*

*Lincoln became president in 1860; Kennedy became president in 1960 (100 years difference).*

*Both presidents were shot dead on a Friday in the presence of their wives. Both were shot in the head.*

*Lincoln was assassinated in the theatre named Kennedy.*

*Kennedy was assassinated in a car named Lincoln.*

*Shortly before his death, Abraham Lincoln had visited Monroe, Maryland; shortly before his death*

*John F. Kennedy had had an affair with Marilyn Monroe.*

*Lincoln was succeeded as president by Andrew Johnson; Kennedy was succeeded by Lyndon Johnson.*

*Andrew Johnson was born in 1808; Lyndon Johnson was born in 1908 (100 years difference).*

Inter-code synchronism is characterized by the coincidence of events having different symbolism. For example, it can be symbolic dreams, which subsequently come true in various real events. Other typical varieties of coincidences of this kind are symbolic prophecies, which are verbal descriptions of an event or some action, symbolically representing an event that will take place in reality in the future. Cf.:

*Old nun Olga predicted many events. Once a deacon with his children came to visit her. The old woman began to put him to bed. She took out a sheet and wrapped it around the man over the top of the head. They recalled this episode when a few months later the deacon died ... (Devyatova 2009, p. 29)*

Consideration of synchronous phenomena in terms of their functionality reveals their two varieties. On the one hand, there are "interplay" synchronistic coincidences whose functional significance is not

obviously traceable. Cases of this kind are externally perceived as manifestations of a certain interplay of events. Cf.:

*The Romanov dynasty started in 1613 with a rite held in the Holy Trinity Ipatiev Monastery; it ended in execution in 1918 in the Ipatiev House in Yekaterinburg.*

On the other hand, there are coincidences that warn a person about upcoming events, provide assistance and support in daily activities. Russian poet V.S. Solovyov wrote in his *Three Meetings* that while working in the library of the British Museum, he discovered in the books the implementation of his passionate thought about the Feminine Deity, which first appeared to him yet in his childhood (... *mysterious force chose my every book; and I read only of her*) (Tr. by I. Granger).

As for objective and subjective synchronistic coincidences, they are represented by such phenomena as signs, omens, and prophetic dreams.

Moreover, signs and omens are objective in nature, as they are represented in objective reality and can be witnessed by many external observers. Cf.: The following signs of an impending war noted in the Russian cultural tradition:

*Before the war, an unusually large crop of mushrooms is observed (also of apples and cucumbers). Two consecutive mushroom-rich years took place before the German invaded the Soviet Union, and, earlier, on the eve of the Russo-Japanese war. In the old days they used to say: "Many mushrooms – many coffins."*

*Before the war, numerous long flashes are observed in the sky.*

*Before the war, usually the harvest is good and hay is abundant, etc. (according to eyewitnesses, these phenomena were observed in 1941).*

*The cobweb across the well was considered a sure sign of imminent deprivation ([http://www.neptun8.ru/Literatura/Primeti\\_voina.htm](http://www.neptun8.ru/Literatura/Primeti_voina.htm)).*

Prophetic dreams refer to subjective synchronistic coincidences: mentally fixed by an individual, they bear personal significance for him/her. The subjectivity of such synchronistic coincidences is also manifested in the fact that they are particularly related to the evaluative characteristics of future events. Thus, S. Freud gave a very striking example of such a dream (told by Plutarch and Artemidorus of Daldis). Besieging the fiercely defending city of Tyre (322 BC), Alexander the Great once saw a dancing satyr in his dream. His court diviner Aristander of Telmessus interpreted the dream through phonetic resemblance: the word *satyr* sounds like the Greek phrase *σά Τύρος* – ‘Tyre is yours’. Thus, the fall of the city was foretold. Inspired by this divination, Alexander continued the siege and in the end the city fell to him (Freud 1989, p. 150).

## 7. Conclusion

The proposed approach offers new perspectives for studying synchronistic coincidences in the context of foreign language teaching. The non-causal substantive coincidences defined as synchronicity can evoke students' interest thus increasing their motivation in language learning. Moreover, by referring to the phenomenon of synchronicity, the methodology of foreign language teaching will be enriched with

new objects and will gain interdisciplinary significance. Besides, in view of this stance, the substantive basis of both synchronicity and reality it is directly connected with will be more apparent.

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