

**WUT 2020****10<sup>th</sup> International Conference “Word, Utterance, Text: Cognitive, Pragmatic and Cultural Aspects”****ADAPTATIONAL STRATEGY OF G.D. GREBENSTCHIKOFF'S LINGUISTIC PERSONALITY IN MULTICULTURAL AMERICAN SOCIETY**

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***Abstract***

The article is devoted to the problem of adaptation of the linguistic personality of an intellectual migrant in a multicultural society. The authors proceed from the assumption that the diversity of adaptation strategies ultimately has two extreme poles: cultural isolation or total assimilation. The question is whether ‘the golden mean’ strategy is possible in a multicultural society, which will neutralize and smooth out the extremes of isolation and assimilation? Turning to the historical experience of multicultural society in the United States of America, the authors of the article actualize the cultural experience of the Siberian-Kazakh writer George D. Grebenstchikoff (1883-1964), who immigrated to the United States in the first half of the 20th century. Based on the analysis of his works written in America, the article examines the writer's personal experience and determines its relevance for solving the problem of choosing an adaptation strategy in a modern multicultural society. To this end, the authors reconstructed and systematized the writer's views on the problem of cultural adaptation. It is concluded that the adaptation experience of George D. Grebenstchikoff carries a lot of useful, instructive and relevant for the 21st century. The successful adaptation of the writer in the United States in the 1920-1950s is a model of the adaptation strategy, that is, the optimal balance between cultural assimilation and cultural isolation, and can serve as a positive example for successful adaptation in a multicultural society.

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## 1. Introduction

Modern global society is characterized by a high level of migration. The significant impact of migration processes on various spheres of society makes their research an important part of the humanities. Numerous researches of migration phenomena in recent years confirm the specific relevance of this issue (Alencar & Deuze, 2017; Alonzi, 2018; Bosetti, Cattaneo, & Peri, 2018; Cattaneo, 2019; Close et al., 2016; De Haas, Vezzoli, Szczepanikova, & Van Criekinge, 2018; Johnson, Bacsu, McIntosh, Jeffery, & Novik, 2019; Kashpur, 2015; Steinman, 2017; Suslova, 2016).

Permanent migration processes inevitably lead to the formation of a multicultural society, the harmonious existence of which depends on the adaptation strategy that migrants adhere to. All the individual and situational diversity of adaptation strategies ultimately has two extremes: (1) cultural isolation, an attempt to withdraw into one's own local traditional and cultural world, or (2) loss of one's own cultural identity, abandoning it and total assimilation. The matter is whether the strategy of 'the golden mean' is possible in the multicultural society? Is it possible not to lose one's ethnic and cultural entity when entering into new national sociocultural environment? And at the same time do not fence off from the common national culture? Is the optimal adaptation possible that neutralizes, alleviates the extremes of isolation and assimilation?

Turning to the historical experience of the first half of the 20th century, it can be noted that, in fact, only one country in the world possessed multicultural properties close to the modern global community – the United States of America. The experience of multicultural society in the USA in the time parameter is the most extensive. Therefore, comprehension of the American experience today is important for understanding the various adaptation strategies that have always been open (and open today) to the linguistic personality of a migrant in a multicultural society.

## 2. Problem Statement

American Literary History presents different answers to the issues of adaptation. From our point of view experience accumulated by American highbrows attracts not only historical interest but also contains many useful, educative, actual things for the 21st century. Indeed the writers have the finest appreciation of multicultural situation. Furthermore the latest discussions in the United States about American national identity, multiculturalism, cultural isolation and multiethnic literature even more updated the subject of positive adaptation (Mark-Viverito, 2015). TuSmith (2017), talking about modern society, notes that 'anxiety' has become "a general feature of our contemporary times" (p. 21). And this anxiety directly affects the atmosphere of different multiethnic audiences.

One of the forgotten names of multiethnic American literature is the name of George D. Grebenstchikoff (1883-1964). He immigrated to the USA in 1924, successfully adapted and lived there for 40 years – till the end of his life. Unfortunately, his name is currently missing in the history of multiethnic American literature. The example of George Grebenstchikoff's successful adaptation in American society, meanwhile, can be the key to understanding the positive adaptation strategy that a migrant needs in a modern multicultural society.

### **3. Research Questions**

It is necessary to consider the personal experience of G.D. Grebenstchikoff and determine the degree of its relevance for solving the problem of selecting an adaptation strategy in a modern multicultural society.

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

The purpose of the research is to identify and reconstruct the writer's views on the problem of adapting the linguistic personality of a migrant in a multicultural American society.

### **5. Research Methods**

To achieve the purpose of the study, a number of methods of linguistic research of the text were used, followed by a cognitive interpretation of the research results. They are extralinguistic analysis, contextual analysis, a comparative method of researching the text.

### **6. Findings**

Summarizing the personal experience of G.D. Grebenstchikoff's linguistic personality, four keys to successful adaptation in a multicultural American society can be identified.

The first key to success is “acute and the most willing” learning English (Grebenstchikoff, 2013a, p. 385). After he came to the USA it became clear that an intellectual person was to be a success if “he knew English well” (Grebenstchikoff, 2013b, p. 383). He wrote: “I learned the language by all means – I read signboards, advertisements, inscriptions on underground wagons and other obscure things that I wanted to understand” (Grebenstchikoff, 2013c, pp. 345–346).

After 10 years of staying in the USA Grebenstchikoff started performing with public lectures in English at American colleges (Grebenstchikoff, 2013c, p. 346). The milestones for him were the lectures about Siberia in 1937 and the report dedicated to the 100-th anniversary of Russian poet Alexander Pushkin which took place at Northwestern University (Chicago). Later the writer called them “the exam for the master of English” (Grebenstchikoff, 2013d, p. 377–378). But it took other three years of trips with English-language lectures around the USA, after which he started giving courses of World and Russian literature at Florida Southern College in Lakeland (Grebenstchikoff, 2013c). However when Ludd M. Spivey characterized George Grebenstchikoff's reputation he agreed with the popular American specialist in Slavic studies at Columbia university Clarence A. Manning's words: “He is perhaps today the outstanding Russian author in the United States” (Russian history courses offered by noted author, 1941). Thus, insistence in learning English let G.D. Grebenstchikoff take the worthy place in American society.

His fluent English (including poetry style), teaching literature and history at an American college, obtaining a PhD – all of this proves George Grebenstchikoff's high level of personal adaptation to American society. Summing up the intermediate results of his life in the USA in 1946 he wrote: “That

was how I made my way in America, not just an ordinary person's way but a professor's way" (Grebenstchikoff, 2013c, p. 348).

The second key to success in America, according to Grebenstchikoff (2013a) is "hard work and only hard work" (p. 387). Arriving in America, he soberly realized that America would require a lot of work:

Any work is rewarded here. The American people here work more hard than in other countries. That is why America is so rich and generous to the working people. And this must be learned first of all by those who were waiting or would be looking for easy work here. Work here is harder, the less we love to work. But America has made from all its labors a holiday of great prosperity for all who labor. (Grebenstchikoff, 2013a, p. 387)

Moreover for George Grebenstchikoff America is "a wonderful country which is always young as here people work joyfully and colorfully" (Grebenstchikoff, 2013e, p. 375). In the years of Great Depression he himself learnt the whole cycle of typographic work, learnt to drive and since 1930 he started his many months trips around the USA with his lectures from ocean to ocean.

The third key is the successful entry into the environment of Americans, that is, directly sociocultural adaptation.

The adaptation to a new environment as Grebenstchikoff (2013a) wrote can be successful only if one understood a real and true America. By his opinion one can understand Americans appropriately only after entering into their environment, having learnt their language, skills and leaving the big city for seeing the country as the big city rhythm sometimes does not make one feel real America (p. 387).

In reliance on own understanding the real America George Grebenstchikoff gave the following practical advice to those who wants to adapt to multicultural American society: "The best certification for those who come to the American environment is your smile, not condemnation of others, and the absence of any complaints" (Grebenstchikoff, 2013a, p. 388).

The fourth key is to be thankful and helpful to the accepting country.

George Grebenstchikoff stresses in every possible way the self-serving position of the selfish consumer of the goods that America provides to its new residents. He repeatedly focuses on the fact that migrants should be grateful to the country that receives them. At the same time, Grebenstchikoff (2013a) understood that a migrant could receive public recognition only when he could be useful to society: "Your main wealth is first of all yourself, your sincere desire to be useful to this country. This is the undoubted, direct and firm path to material and moral success" (p. 386).

Grebenstchikoff (2013f) was an opponent of ethnocultural isolation. The writer is convinced of the dangers of isolating a linguistic personality within an ethnic immigrant environment. He declared the openness and richness of the immigrant's spiritual life. In the new multicultural environment, one should be interested in everything that "the soul lives" – art, science, music, literature. He wrote: "Closing ourselves, imagining that assimilation is harmful to our purely spiritual and national traditions, we thereby plunge into the narrow realm of loneliness" (p. 383).

Another pole of sociocultural adaptation involves a complete immersion in a new reality with an attempt to reformat one's own identity, with the rejection of the immanent personality constants, from its previous sociocultural roots and ethnic experience. So this is adaptation which turns to assimilation. No doubt, in the first generation of migrants this line was chosen not by anyone. But among the young people who grew up in the USA this life strategy under the strong American civilization influence was very wide-spread. In the 1950s Grebenstchikoff (2013g, pp. 390–391), after many years of trips around the USA stated that not more than 5-10% of young people with Russian origin could read and speak Russian.

Certainly, the USA, where in the first half of the 20th century the concept ‘melting pot’ was dominant in practice, was considered to be the society which was a society that best served the functions of sociocultural assimilation. It was a time of maximum migration from Europe to the USA. In 1920, an American philosopher and writer of Spanish descent Santayana (2008) remarked that American life is a powerful solvent that neutralizes the individuality of any, even the most alien intellectual element, and combines it in reckless optimism and in the native good-will. It was at this time and in this environment that George Grebenstchikoff (2013g) got into. But for him, such a radical way of integration into American society was unacceptable. He wrote: “When it is morally or financially difficult for us and when we don't want to turn into an anonymous crowd or into the dust of obscurity, we resort to the protection of our national culture” (p. 389–390).

As an intellectual linguistic personality George Grebenstchikoff could not agree to the loss of his own ethnocultural identity. He did not want to dissolve in the average crowd, he wanted to maintain the brightness of ethnocultural life. According to the writer, ethnic identity is an important component of the intellectual identity.

At the same time, George Grebenshchikov (2013g,) rejects the strategy of ethnocultural isolation. On the contrary, he emphasizes the practical need for cultural cooperation. If immigrants will learn American culture without forgetting their own culture, then “it will result in an excellent mutual exchange of values, useful communication with the local population, which will not look at you [immigrants] as strangers, but will gladly accept in its midst and open its heart” (p. 393).

Cultural cooperation between the various components of the American multicultural society, which George Grebenstchikoff sought in the 1930s – 1950s, reminds the concept ‘salad bowl’ that began to spread in the USA in the second half of the 20th century. There is no doubt that he actually shared the approach to American society as a ‘salad bowl’ and wished to preserve the multicultural diversity of American society.

## **7. Conclusion**

If we turn to modern concepts, then G.D. Grebenstchikoff was a representative of that multiculturalism, which revealed “the interplay of complex hybrid identities”. He himself was a manifestation of a dynamic, “complex identity” (Stanciu & Lin, 2017, p. 4).

It is noteworthy that the writer was born and grown up on the other side of the globe – in Altai – in the region, which today is designated as Eurasia (where Asia is gradually moving to Europe). On the modern political world map – this is the junction of the borders between Kazakhstan, Russia and China. It can be argued that George Grebenstchikoff grew up on the frontier, thousands of miles from the capitals.

It was, firstly, the intercultural Kazakh and Russian, Turkic and Slavic frontier. And, secondly, the natural Siberian and steppe frontier, where the Siberian, Altai mountains pass into the endless Kazakh Steppe.

George Grebenstchikoff was originally a multicultural person and used two languages – Russian (Slavic) and Kazakh (Turkic). And when he became an American writer and citizen, he mastered, of course, the English language. Also note that George Grebenstchikoff was of mixed ethnicity. His ancestors in the male line were Kalmyks (Mongolian ethnos). Therefore, his appearance was noticeably different from standard Europeans. Almost all noted his Oriental and Asian facial features.

G.D. Grebenstchikoff is an American writer and a Siberian immigrant simultaneously, he is close to the USA, Europe and Asia. He is not just an ‘average’ representative of American Russian-language literature, he is an ethnoculturally specific author. Three identities coexist in him – the new American, the former All-Russian and the original ethno-cultural Siberian-Kazakh. And this complex identity was reflected in his personal views on adaptation and assimilation in a multiethnic society.

In practical terms, in the author’s articles and essays written and published in the United States in the 1920s and 1950s, G.D. Grebenstchikov formulates, in fact, four fundamental and at the same time pragmatic rules for successful adaptation in the USA. These key rules for success are: (1) Urgent English learning and preserving the native language. (2) Hard work, not a desire for quick enrichment. (3) Cognition of America and practical tolerance. (4) Positive integration, cooperation, and gratitude to the host country.

In the real conditions of the USA in the first half of the 20th century, Grebenstchikoff (2013f) was a supporter of the optimal variant of adaptation strategy. This constructive variant did not imply isolation from either its ethnic culture or multicultural American society. According to him, adaptation is not a one-sided process of adaptation, but a process carried out “for our two practical benefits” (p. 383).

Maintaining an optimal balance between the poles of cultural assimilation and cultural isolation, according to G.D. Grebenstchikoff, is an active, pragmatic and positive adaptation strategy for an intellectual linguistic personality in a multicultural society.

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