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Dialogue of Cultures - Culture of Dialogue: from Conflicting to Understanding

SIGNIFICANCE OF VARIOUS TYPES OF DISCOURSE IN INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION TRAINING

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Abstract

The article discusses the change of vector of scientific research in theory and practice of FLT under the new anthropocentric paradigm where the *person* as a self-developed personality has become a focus of attention. There is an increased awareness of the differentiation of text interpretation with regard to each reader/listener. A text is now viewed in relation with a person's intention to communicate; as an output of their activity, an expression of their personality, needs, views and intentions. In this connection, there has been a shift from the text-oriented to discourse-oriented approach in FLT. We provide a critical review of existing approaches to defining the concept of discourse from interdisciplinary perspective and focus on the discourse as a fully-fledged linguodidactic phenomenon. We present an analysis of the capacity of discourse and its types and components which are subject to FLT, with an objective to prepare students for socio-cultural and sociolinguistic variability of intercultural communication. The level of discourse acquisition will be determined by forming of the students' discourse competence. The article provides the evidence that both professional and everyday discourse are necessary to be taken into consideration while teaching a L2 as there is a stronger tendency that demonstrates the need to pay attention to students' preparation for socially variable conditions of intercultural dialogue. Thus, many established FLT components will be reconsidered.

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1. Introduction

The fundamental issue of the theory and practice of FLT has for a long time been *the text*, which has been a base for studying process, new material presentation and development of exercise system. Under the new anthropocentric paradigm, the vector of scientific research has changed and *the person* as a self-developed personality has become the focus of attention. It therefore becomes necessary to reflect on individual communicative acts of interaction between a speaker and their communicant, in which particularly important is the interpretation of extralinguistic context (Tareva, 2017a). From this point of view, “the mechanism of communication on the level of personal connotations” is significant. That is to say, the participants of communication with their changing and inconsistent goals, reasons and mood are taken into account, alongside the dynamics of their personal relationship and social status. Besides, it is necessary to consider the main tendencies of modern communication, for instance, narrowing down the range of stylistic registers and concepts simplification. A course for democratization of social life, alongside the emergence and development of “network society” and strengthening the role of communication in a person’s life, underlies these tendencies.

Consequently, the former attitudes, incidental to the role and functions of the text in FLT have been substantially revised. Thus there is an increased awareness of the differentiation of text interpretation with regard to each reader/listener. A text is not interpreted homogeneously, each person can interpret it in their own way (based on personal attitudes) which might be inconsistent with the author's intentions. Besides, the perceived information can be biased by the reader/listener who can engage in dialogue with the author, to form their opinion regarding the content, provide hyperlinks, comments etc. A text is now viewed in relation with a person’s intention to communicate; as an output of their activity, an expression of their personality, needs, views and intentions. It is confirmed by MacCarthy’s (2000) studies: “Making sense of a text is an act of interpretation that depends as much on what we as readers bring to a text as what the authors put into it” (p. 27). It is studied not in isolation, but as a coherence of both the speaker and the listener’s interaction. Recent linguodidactic research has directed their attention to placing the *discourse* at the centre of their concerns in contrast with the previous studies focused on the text. There has been a shift from the text-oriented to discourse-oriented approach in FLT. The discourse as a research objective contains the set of elements necessary for the implementation of communication. These are the text itself and extra-linguistic components.

2. Problem Statement

Recently, the issue of discourse has been a focus of attention (Arytyunova, Vodak, van Dijk, Kibrik, Stepanov, Karasik, Karaulov, Makarov, Prohorov, Chernyavskaya, Chudinov etc). So far, the term “discourse” has become cross-disciplinary and is not interpreted unambiguously. Its interpretation depends on the researcher’s needs to investigate a particular aspect of its operation.

Recently there have been two approaches to discourse interpretation: 1) discourse as a communicative experience recorded in writing and speaking; 2) discourse as a corpus of thematically correlated texts (Chernyavskaya, 2001). Karasik (2002) says that text and discourse are interrelated notions in structure and content of communication. He provides the definition, outlining its multidimensional cross-

disciplinary nature: “Discourse is a bridge between the speech, the communication and language behaviour on the one hand, and the remaining recorded text on the other” (p. 192).

3. Research Questions

In recent years, the anthropocentric paradigm has been established and international contacts have been intensified. Thus it becomes increasingly evident that it is impossible to disregard discourse in FLT, as the understanding of intercultural communication variation is crucial for providing conditions for more effective and adequate understanding of the communication participants. Consequently, discourse can be identified as a fully-fledged linguodidactic phenomenon. This can be confirmed by the emergence of discursive paradigm (or approach) in language learning, described by MacCarthy (2000) and supported by some modern studies (for example, Latysheva, 2018).

In Russian FLT, extralinguistic parameters of communication have long been overlooked and text still often remains the basic concept in FLT. At present, discourse practices are viewed as innovative linguodidactic models that are not widespread. This also applies to FLT outside Russia: “Existing EFL studies largely point to non-native students’ poor command of English discourse markers, in that they use them less or differently, or use a narrower range of these units than native speakers” (Vickov & Jakupčević, 2017, p. 650). Though we can see a growing tendency for studying the role of discourse in teaching process, e.g. Kertaeva (2020) discusses discourse in FLT and proves its role to prevent possible miscommunication; Mordovina and Voyakina (2018) distinguish the difference between the concepts ‘text’ and ‘discourse’ in ELT sphere, study professionally-oriented discourse as a basis of ELT and provide some discourse-oriented teaching technologies that could be implied into teaching process (the Project Technology, the Case Study Technology, the Debate Technology). Tareva says about the necessity to present different variants of language aligned to a specific discourse from the linguodidactic perspective (Tareva, 2017b).

Many researchers studying discourse from a linguo-didactic perspective (Evstigneeva, Elukhina, Golovina, Gorbunov, Luschinskaya) mention two positions. The first is ‘the author’s position’, and the second is ‘the addressee’s position’, as discourse is both a receptive and productive speech act. As Elukhina underlines, this speech act is a sample of the realization of a speaker’s communicative intentions in the context of a particular communicative situation and with reference to the partner of communication (a representative of different culture) expressed in relevant verbal and non-verbal linguistic devices.

Regardless of the point of view (whether aimed at the author or at the addressee), when we create an utterance in a discourse we follow Aleksandrova and take into account the following entries: “what do we create a certain text for and what its goal is; how this goal is achieved and for what; what social context there will be as a space for the speech act. It is also important to identify its place and genre” (Aleksandrova, 2017, p. 300). Some questions might be added to the aforementioned, such as: what the author’s and their partner’s social status is, what their relationships are, if it is a typical text for the author (in a written discourse) etc.

According to Mitchell and Shilnov (2014), discourse must be the basis of FLT, as the adequacy of learners’ linguistic behaviour is distinguished by the meeting of communication goal in a certain communicative situation, rather than only language accuracy. Thereupon, many components of the educational process (as learning content) are subject to revision. For example, not only content and the

language of the text for listening/reading is important while teaching these language skills. It is necessary to set the situation in which this text can be produced, and to explain the author's intentions and characteristics. While teaching speaking skills, we should also abandon unification of the situation and provide students with discourse strategies (e.g. while working on cases).

Therefore, abandoning the text-oriented approach in favour of the discourse-oriented one is obvious. "That will introduce into FLT new impulses conducive to the greater awareness of the goal-setting, learning content and principles. Many established FLT categories (foreign language textbook, tutorial methods, exercises etc) will be reconsidered" (Tareva, 2017a, p. 191).

4. Purpose of the Study

In this study, we present an analysis of the capacity of discourse and its types and components which are subject to FLT, with an objective to prepare students for socio-cultural and sociolinguistic variability of intercultural communication.

5. Research Methods

The research relies on theoretical studies in the fields of linguistics (90s-2000s) and language education (2000s-20s). That made it possible for the authors to clarify the linguodidactic status of the discourse and discourse competence. To identify the discourse parameters of a person's verbal behavior in cross-cultural communication with a foreigner (both in professional and everyday context) the following methods are required: critical literature analysis; comparison of approaches to discourse studies in Russian and foreign research practices; integration of positive experience in discourse studies in terms of linguodidactic context.

6. Findings

Having analysed the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR), which reflects the requirements for L2 learners in the competence-based approach, we can point to the tendency towards strengthening of sociolinguistic parameters of a person's communicative "portrait". We can confirm this statement referring to Milne, who has recognized the equal importance of being able to use the socially and culturally acceptable norms of interaction of the language: "The speaker must be able to use the language not only accurately but also appropriately, according to the context" (Milne, 2000, p.8). This tendency takes place because of the intensity of cross-cultural contacts and expansion of spheres occupied by representatives of different cultures during intercultural communication. We see that for European community discourse competence becomes an imperative. It is defined as "the ability to use appropriate strategies in the construction and interpretation of texts" (van Ek, 2001, p.41).

Discourse competence (Boyer, Canale, Swain, Moirand, van Ek, & Elukhina), as mentioned in the updated version of CEFR (2020) is a component of pragmatic competence and refers to "The user/learner's knowledge of the principles of language use according to which messages are organised, structured and arranged. It concerns the ability to design texts, including generic aspects like *Thematic development* and *Coherence and cohesion* as well as cooperative principles and Turn-taking" (CEFR, 2020, p. 138).

Currently it is viewed as the most crucial one in various studies, e.g. in written academic discourse (Marta & Mureşan, 2016), through reading skills (Saighi & Chaouki, 2017).

FLT studies in Russia have identified the aspects necessary for discourse competence forming. They are: 1) awareness of different kinds of discourse; 2) the ability to choose the kind of discourse that is consistent with the speaker's communicative objectives and is able to implement their communicative intentions; 3) the creation of real discourse in accordance with the sphere and the communicative situation in due respect of the partner's status and communication goal; 4) the ability to ensure the appropriateness of one's linguistic behavior, relying on background knowledge of culture, customs and traditions of a target language country; 5) understanding and interpretation of the information (of the perceived discourse) relying on awareness of the situation, the speaker, their communicative goal and background knowledge of the native speakers (Elukhina, 2002, p. 13).

Beyond these aspects, the diversity of discourse typologies has also aroused considerable interest among scholars. According to the sociolinguistic approach (considering the positions of communication participants), suggested by Karasik, all types of discourse can be divided into personality-oriented and status-oriented. In terms of the personality-oriented type, intercultural interaction members tend to reveal their inner worlds and understand their partner's personality in its multiple dimensions. As concerns the status-oriented type, communication members are viewed as representatives of social groups and perform the role ascribed by the communicative situation (Karasik, 2002). These types of discourse can be summarized as 'everyday' and 'professional'.

Everyday communication, in contrast with the professional one, is of random and nonchalant nature. At the beginning of speech, the speaker may be unaware of their ways of verbal realization of intents, the intents themselves and the speech goal. The specific nature of everyday discourse is that it tends to compress all the information transmitted, to imply the abridged communicative code. Of relevance is the variable, biased and emotional experience of the current communicative situation (Karasik, 2002, p. 202).

Everyday discourse is dialogue-oriented. Dialogue is performed more quickly compared with monologue, that makes it difficult to identify its clear structure and cohesion. The sentences are often unfinished in form, integrate a considerable quantity of colloquial clichés and figures of speech that are used reflexively. The mental processes of participants of conversation (ethnic, psychological, sociocultural stereotypes and attitudes) in everyday discourse are compiled, and eventually there is the outcome of these complicated processes (Khoroshilova, 2016). Everyday discourse can be defined as activity, "characterized by non-institutional principles of association of participants, locality of goals, values of extra-institutional unity and awareness of their personal position in a mini group, openness of the thematic structure, the availability of psychological attitudes of participants of discourse free from institutional frameworks of communication" etc. (Habibova, 2020, p. 339).

In terms of content, it is accompanied by emotional inflection and subjective judgmental attitudes. Everyday communication is also characterized by a wider variety of topics, which touch upon not only personal relationships, but social, psychological, political and other aspects of life as well. Thus, abilities to be a part of society and to behave themselves, establish intercultural bridges are formed. This type of discourse is implemented in various genres, such as talks about interests, family; discussion about urgent problems; intentional communication aimed at sharing information or conveying a message. Besides, we

can notice that a significant amount of information conveyed and received might lack informative usefulness, quality and depth and remains perfunctory or superfluous. Communication of this kind aims at communication itself rather than at decision making, because in everyday talks, a person, as a rule, summarizes that experience of cognition of the surrounding world from their own perspective.

Discourse functioning is not restricted by only the everyday sphere of communication — it also touches upon the professional sphere of people's performance. This is supported by the status-oriented (professional) type of discourse featured by Karasik. There has been a surge in scholarly interest in professional discourse (Aznacheeva & Mamonova, 2017; Mordovina & Voyakina, 2018). It can be defined as a complex concept, which represents a specialist's purposeful activity, characterized by shared knowledge of communicants, stereotypical communication situations (that take place in accordance with rules and standards accepted in this professional area) aimed at completing a task and thus achieving socially relevant results. Each type of professional discourse, in turn, possesses specific collocations, speech patterns and so-called "discourse formulas" (Shaturnaya, 2009, pp. 175-176).

To engage in a productive dialogue of professional linguistic cultures, an L2 student must acquire the skills and strategies that will enable them to use instrumentalities typical for professional discourse. Shaturnaya and Baranova identify two aspects of teaching professional discourse. The first one is the teaching interaction language. It is necessary to select grammar, vocabulary and phonetic material. The second is teaching ideas, values and conceptual framework of colleagues of other linguistic communities (Baranova, 2008; Shaturnaya, 2009). Lazareva enumerates more components of teaching foreign language professional discourse. The author submits that the classes should be based on the examples of various communicative spheres, situations, topics, texts, intercultural competence, language and speaking skills, communicative and intellectual changes in discourse analysis (Lazareva, 2019).

The level of professional discourse acquisition will be determined by a person's abilities to build their utterances on the basis of the extralinguistic factors, context of communication, adequate handling language repertoire and achieving communication goals (by means of minimizing intercultural professional distance, i.e. forming of their professional discourse competence).

7. Conclusion

The analysis has resulted in certain conclusions significant for reformatting students' language training. First of all, there is a certain contradiction between the need to train students of the elements of everyday and professional discourse (and, consequently, forming of their discourse competence) and lack of awareness of status and features of discourse and discourse competence functioning in FLT. The relevance of teaching foreign language discourse is attributable to its significance in fully-fledged intercultural communication and logical and clear expression of thoughts to be interpreted correctly. This applies to both professional interaction and interpersonal connection.

Secondly, it is necessary to broaden the scope of a learner's discourse competence, highlighting its operation in various spheres of interaction in the context on everyday and professional person's activity.

To summarize, the necessity of strengthening discourse speech parameters appears to be the crucial point of cross-cultural dialogue in a reality rich in international contacts. In both European and

Russian academic thesaurus, there is a stronger tendency that demonstrates the need to pay attention to students' preparation for socially variable conditions of intercultural dialogue.

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