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

VERBAL MANIPULATION IN THE CONTEXT OF TEACHING INTERCULTURAL FOREIGN LANGUAGE COMMUNICATION

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Abstract

Globalization and the key role of the English language redefine the contact situations of intercultural communication where such phenomena as “linguistic imperialism”, “linguicism”, “ethnocentrism” and suchlike are no longer a news for the participants. That is especially vibrant within present-day mass-media discourse as a specific case of intercultural communication. All this can’t but affect a foreign language classroom making us revisit the main goal of FLT – building intercultural communicative competence. The authors found that it is crucial to consider the problem of verbal manipulation in the system of teaching a language within intercultural approach and question what instruments of verbal manipulation are used to influence the listener within intercultural communication. The paper examines manipulative strategy and tactics, as well as their role in the context of intercultural foreign-language education. As a response to the problem, the article presents the authors’ definition of conventional communicative competence as the way to restore the broken intercultural communication within verbal manipulation to the shared meaning-making.

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1. Introduction

Foreign language education in Russia has long become an object of academic scrutiny. It is highly demanded to revisit current teaching practices to trigger the development of the intercultural communicative competence (Byram, 2013; Tareva, 2014). Higher education is considered to be a key institute setting “a powerful standard for intercultural dialogue, which cannot take place unless each participant admits the possibility of good ideas originating with others from very different backgrounds” (Bergan, 2010, p. 71). Intercultural dialogue is defined as “a process that comprises an open and respectful exchange of views between individuals and groups with different ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic backgrounds and heritage, on the basis of mutual understanding and respect. It requires the freedom and ability to express oneself, as well as the willingness and capacity to listen to the views of others. Intercultural dialogue contributes to political, social, cultural and economic integration and the cohesion of culturally diverse societies. It fosters equality, human dignity and a sense of common purpose. It aims to develop a deeper understanding of diverse worldviews and practices, to increase co-operation and participation (or the freedom to make choices), to allow personal growth and transformation, and to promote tolerance and respect for the other” (Council of Europe, 2008, section 3.1). The Federal State Educational Standards of Higher education for the specialty “Linguistics” (45.03.02) and “Pedagogical education” (44.03.01) for bachelor’s degree in Russia suggest a student at a language university being a competent (proficient) user of a language who is aware of traditions, values of one’s own and other culture and obtains skills of socio-cultural and intercultural communication to interact effectively (Federal State educational standards of Higher education for the specialty “Linguistics”, 2014; Federal State educational standards of Higher education for the specialty “Pedagogical education”, 2015).

At present, the issues of teaching intercultural communication are vibrant with new approaches and transferable across multiple domains of linguistics, the theory of teaching, linguodidactics, cultural and social studies, etc. Thus teaching a language through culture for recent years has called for classroom practice to reflect the correlation of foreign language communicative competence with intercultural competence, to interpret intercultural competence as one of the crucial goals of teaching foreign language communication, again reflect the correlation of foreign language communicative competence with intercultural communicative competence and the issues related to interchangeability of intercultural competence and intercultural communicative competence.

Apart from competence, activity and communicative-cognitive approaches, intercultural approach to foreign language education creates the methodological basis for scientific research in modern linguodidactics (Flyantikova & Cherkes, 2019; Griffith et al., 2016). In other words, intercultural approach is an environment for cultural equality, egalitarianism, tolerance, parity of different linguacultures. In the frames of culture-oriented approaches to FLT within which the orientations toward accounting intercultural differences and common characteristics of cultures are represented, intercultural approach plays a crucial role as a dominant of modern paradigm in FLT.

Thus, much of the impetus for the study of intercultural communicative competence arouse out of efforts to cope with practical problems to ensure adequate understanding and relevant meaning-making whilst communicating from out different social, cultural and linguistic backgrounds. However, intercultural communication is not studied in the situations of verbal manipulation that endanger effective interaction of

communicative partners. It is to define the problem of verbal manipulation and suggest possible ways to solve it within FLT provided motivation for this article (based on an on-going research).

2. Problem Statement

Despite a common opinion that global communication is operating on egalitarian principles, global misunderstanding as well as geopolitical, socio-cultural and economic conflicts are growing at an exponential rate thus revealing unpredictable transformation of global communicative environment. Indeed, the initiative of the authoritative states to keep other cultures under control unveils the facts of “linguistic imperialism” and ethnocentrism, “the phenomenon of cultural impact and its stronger version – cultural attack” (Peyman et al., 2016, p. 70) continuously reconstituting cultural inequality between virtually all-power-rankings countries and their less convincing and persuasive opponents. As a result, such tendency to use the “soft power” (Tareva & Tarev, 2017), craving for the worldwide control and manipulative intention to change behaviors, attitudes and the way of thinking of others nations and cultures, presents the world with a challenge and adds depth to the issues of intercultural communication. This highlights a compelling reason to adopt the phenomenon of verbal manipulation into the system of teaching a language within intercultural approach.

3. Research Questions

Studying the phenomenon of verbal manipulation in the system of teaching a language within intercultural approach allows to solve the following tasks:

- to study verbal manipulation in the context of a variety of scientific approaches;
- to define verbal manipulation in mass-media discourse as an example of intercultural communication;
- to find out communicative manifestation of verbal manipulation in mass-media discourse;
- to define manipulative communicative strategy and manipulative communicative tactics;
- to provide the author’s classification of the above-mentioned phenomena;
- to suggest the way of overcoming verbal manipulation in intercultural communication.

4. Purpose of the Study

In the context of development of modern society oriented to the construction and distribution of meanings on personal as well as on the level of intercultural communication, information is considered to be a driving force. Mass-media discourse becomes a key discourse that is used to formulate conceptual picture of the world of an individual (on intercultural level). The influence of mass-media known as the most significant power in modern world contradicts the main aim of FLT – development of intercultural communicative competence and determines disparity of cultures, linguistic imperialism, linguistic discrimination. The given discourse is characterized by “refusal of open assessment and setting on hidden implicit influence on mass consciousness” (Melnychuk, 2019; Zelenskaya & Zubareva, 2018; Zheltukhina, 2015, 2016). Consequently, one of the key functions of mass-media discourse singled out in our thorough analysis of the scientific studies (Dubskikh, 2015) can be manipulative influence. Taking into

account the abovementioned characteristics of the studied discourse we consider mass-media discourse as a systematic process of translating values and worldviews of national cultural picture of the world through mass-media, and that is potentially oriented to the manipulative influence realized by specific instruments. As a result, the problem of shuddering intercultural equilibrium by intercultural partner (the “speaker” in mass-media texts) appears and determines the goal of the given study – to neutralize manipulative effect and harmonize intercultural communication (in mass-media discourse as an example of intercultural communication).

5. Research Methods

In compliance with the purpose of the research, the following methods have been undertaken: the analysis of scientific articles (theory and practice of teaching foreign language, linguistic, philosophical, etc. studies), the publications devoted to the studied problem of verbal manipulation, media-texts (BBC NEWS, Guardian, Telegraph, etc.) devoted to the topic of the article. General linguistic methods are carried out: intent-analysis (general analysis of manipulative communicative strategies and tactics, manipulative goals and intentions of an intercultural communicant), description (description of the results of on-going article).

6. Findings

Manipulation as such has come to be perceived as a thoroughly studied phenomenon. The recent scholarly attempts to conceptualize the term are presented by an array of approaches: philosophical political approach (Docenko, 2000); psychological approach (Zelinskii, 2008), etc. The analysis however singles out the lack of attention being paid by the researchers to linguistic interpretation of this phenomenon. All in short, verbal manipulation is characterized by a complex structure of the process of manipulative effect carried out by speech and its integrated social and cognitive basis (psychological features) of the listener (Levina, 2018, pp. 428-429).

A more nuanced understanding is reached for sure in an intercultural context of communication and FLT. Normally the verbal-semantic code of the foreign language (the intercultural partner’s language picture of the world) is registered and partially adopted by a recipient of the “code” (a student of a language university) if found compatible with that of the home culture. We arrived at understanding that within the situation of intercultural communication *verbal manipulation is a communicative manipulative space in the frames of which the speaker (an intercultural partner) tends to realize one’s hidden implicit influence through communicative strategies and tactics of manipulation (linguistic and extralinguistic means) to change cultural values of the listener* (Levina, 2018, pp. 428-429).

The English mass-media articles of socio-political discourse (BBC, New York Times, The Guardian) are viewed as a particular case of verbal manipulation within intercultural communication. The analysis of a wide scope of the mass-media texts devoted to the government policy in the Russian Federation, international interaction of Russia on the world arena, the personality of V.V. Putin, etc. unveil a significant bank of materials to examine verbal manipulation within intercultural communication.

When trying to teach intercultural communication free of manipulation and hence overcome the effect of it, one needs to have a clear idea about what the ways (strategies and tactics) of verbal manipulation are for it to manifest itself in the mass-media text.

All things considered, communicative strategy (or communication strategy (Amin, 2017; Ardianto, 2016; Kárpáti, 2017)) is determined as a cognitive strategic plan to influence the listener verbally, using verbal resources to achieve global communicative goal of the speaker (that of to influence listener's values, way of thinking and the national outlook). Besides, communicative tactics (Schostak, 2015; Umirzakova, 2016) of manipulation is represented as a form (speech/language) of embodiment of verbal manipulation on the level of local realization of global manipulative goal of the speaker.

Based on the classification by Martynova (2009), communicative strategies can be identified by presentation, manipulation and convention. Communicative strategy of presentation refers to the intercultural communicative situation when the communicant shares (delivers) one's relatively neutral national cultural worldview in the course of communication. Alternatively, communicative strategy of manipulation means covert, implicit influence on the listener aiming at taking certain benefits upon obtaining one's communicative goal. Communicative strategy of manipulation endangers intercultural communication due to the fact that a range of verbal means are used to achieve speaker's manipulative intentions, to change listener's cultural values, etc.

The communicative manifestation of manipulation embraces communicative strategies, tactics and a menu of related linguistic and extralinguistic means (see Table 1).

Table 01. Communicative manifestation of manipulation

Manipulative communicative strategies	Manipulative communicative tactics	Linguistic means	Extralinguistic means
1. Strategy of manipulative accent	1.1 Discredit	metaphor metonymy affective words periphrasis	appeal to values
	1.2 Personalization	words-symbols	personal examples, reference to the authority
	1.3 Provocation	terms, affective words, evaluative adverbs, evaluative adjectives, adverbs of uncertainty	unconfirmed facts, witness's opinions, expert authoritative institution's facts
	1.4 Fragmentation		statistics
2. Strategy of hidden self-presentation	2.1 Prognosis	Rhetorical question	

A variety of linguistic and extralinguistic means is used to implicate manipulative influence into the mass-media texts. To illustrate, the analysis of the articles has allowed to reveal the following linguistic means: strategy of manipulative accent, tactics of discredit are realized in the following sentence through the metaphor: "It was meant to be a moment of glory for Vladimir Putin, basking in the glow from a successful winter Olympics" (Knight, 2014); strategy of manipulative accent, tactics of personalization can

be viewed in linguistic means of the words-symbols: "he has now himself become "Moscow" - the President of Russia, Vladimir Putin" and in extralinguistic means of the authoritative opinion: "I think it's the key to understanding Putin," says his German biographer, Boris Reitschuster. "We would have another Putin and another Russia without his time in East Germany" (Bowlby, 2015), etc.

Unlike manipulation, communicative strategy of convention, on the contrary, allows to hold a commonly accepted, agreed upon and tolerant dialogue, with the communicative space being explicit for both partners of intercultural communication. Thus, conventional and presentational communicative strategies allow intercultural partners to interact effectively on the basis of interpersonal and intercultural communication. But it is only conventional communicative strategy that may readdress and restore the broken communication from one-sided manipulation to the shared meaning-making. In other words, ***it is our rationale that mutual understanding and effective intercultural communication between cultures are possible to achieve and realize by using communicative strategy of convention.*** In particular, to restore the intercultural equilibrium shattered by the imposed will of manipulation it's rational to transform the speaker's communicative strategy of manipulation into the listener's communicative strategy of convention. In the latter case compromise is supposed to be achieved and cooperation will be ensured to provide effective intercultural communication. It thus sets a clear research objective to overcome manipulation by harmonizing the communicative spaces of the speaker and the listener both framed by certain culture-specific systems of references, values and attitudes.

And it is the level of meaning-making that is to be addressed. It is necessary to transform the incoming manipulative message into the outgoing message of cooperation and convention which is, by and large, the process of intercultural mediation. On these grounds, new teaching practices and toolkits are to be designed to show how it can be operationalized. The menu of activities includes the exercises aimed at: creating common basis for the further students' work (comprehending the main terms of the course: verbal manipulation, communicative strategy, tactics, etc.); identifying verbal manipulation in mass-media discourse (studying the classification of communicative strategies and tactics of manipulation and utilizing it for the analysis of mass-media texts with verbal manipulation); interpreting verbal manipulation in the system of conventional relations (comprehending verbal manipulation as a component of the situation of international communication and developing the ability of a student to analyze his/her own system of the national visions); overcoming verbal manipulation (transforming the fact and effect of manipulative influence into the conventional dialogue); reflecting on how the process of developing intercultural communicative competence (in particular, conventional competence) is being realized (on the basis of self-analysis, self-assessment).

7. Conclusion

At present, taking into consideration the calls of geopolitical situation teaching intercultural communication is a strategic mission and so implies new teaching practices and techniques. We rest on the rationale that to overcome the negative effect of manipulation (i.e. being manipulated) two core steps are to be taken: to identify and neutralize through convention. Being aware of verbal manipulation the learner (or potential communicant) utilizes reflection and triggers a particular communicative strategy of convention to neutralize manipulative effect and harmonize intercultural communication.

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