

ISCKMC 2020**International Scientific Congress «KNOWLEDGE, MAN AND CIVILIZATION»****CONCEPT OF “SPIRITUAL” IN THE DISCOURSE OF LITERARY
MAGAZINES: COGNITIVE NARRATIVE ANALYSIS**

Vera Vladimirovna Antropova (a)*, Vasilii Victorovich Fedorov (b),
Elena Gennadievna Doronina (c)
*Corresponding author

(a) Chelyabinsk State University, 342-45, Victory Ave., Chelyabinsk, 454014, Russia, ava45@yandex.ru,

(b) Chelyabinsk State University, 8-149, Chicherin str., Chelyabinsk, 454100, Russia, vvf-82@mail.ru,

(c) South Ural State University, 10-187, Shumenskaya str., Chelyabinsk, 454071, Russia, doroninaeg@mail.ru

Abstract

The paper attempts for a comprehensive cognitive-narrative analysis of the “spiritual” concept implemented in the discourse of literary (or “thick”) magazines. Thick domestic magazines are a unique product of modern media culture that continue the traditions of journalism of the 19-20th centuries. Today, monthly literary and art and socio-political magazines represent a separate elite segment of Russian journal periodicals opposing other information flows, but in their structure having ideological and cultural-aesthetic discreteness and disunity. On the one hand, there are radical, oppositional publications that pursue the ideology of national conservatism, support traditional patriarchal values (The Contemporary), on the other hand, the magazines focused on Western liberal democratic ideals (The Banner). In the situation of axiological pluralism and relativism, it seems advisable to consider the cognitive and narrative mechanisms for the implementation of basic values in the discourses of two magazines – The Banner and The Contemporary being in opposing relationship. As an authentic, relevant value-identifying basis, we addressed the spiritual axiosphere, which at the methodological level was expressed in the appeal to the concept of “spiritual”. Being a methodological tool for studying value meanings in discursive practices of selected print media and at the same time the main heuristic unit of linguoconceptology the concept is understood as a mental construct with complex cognitive organization. The core and margin structure of the concept made it possible to distinguish the axiological dominants of the conceptual field under consideration and determine cognitive strategies for its construction in the discursive space of “thick” magazines.

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Keywords: Literary magazines, spiritual values, concept, narratives, discursive pattern



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1. Introduction

The axiological crisis in all spheres of life of the Russian society led to a value dominant of scientific research in the field of humanism. Researchers attribute the modern situation as axiological-normative uncertainty, value relativism caused by the “decline of the social authority of traditional values” (Tilinina, 2010, p. 51). The value-cultural dynamics in Russia is moving towards axiological pluralization and differentiation, as a result of which a modern “person is in dire need of obtaining fundamental value constants” (Pushkareva, 2018, p. 241).

Journalism as a social institution, reflecting the paradigm trends of each era, today also went down the path of differentiation, pluralization of value systems. Researchers today have high hopes for the media, since “the media discourse reflects important trends in value searches in the information society” (Pushkareva, 2018, p. 241). First of all, this refers to the value-identifying and value-guiding function of the media (Pushkareva, 2018).

2. Problem Statement

The special product of modern media culture is “thick” magazines, which simultaneously act as agents of journalistic and literary activities.

Today, such magazines serve a unique “guide” to the general humanitarian trends of time, a kind of “standard” for understanding the fundamental values of the society, they represent the elite segment of the Russian journal press, but even in its structure there is a value-ideological and cultural-aesthetic discreteness and disunity.

We addressed axiological constants – spiritual values representing unchanged, deeply rooted value ideas and meanings in each national culture. On the other hand, we suggested that in the conditions of radical changes in the spiritual life of the society, the value restructuring, the spiritual axiosphere will naturally be filled with transformed content, the essence of which will be determined by the discursive rules of the media.

Thus, the production of value meanings in the form of concepts consolidating them inevitably mates with the media polydiscursivity, which are forced to obey various conventions, certain cognitive strategies and narrative schemes. We may refer to the presence of “narrative patterns” (Stapleton & Wilson, 2017, p. 62) functioning in the discourse of “thick” literary magazines, which have a specific representation within each individual publication and update concepts through explanatory stories.

3. Research Questions

The study of the issue of constructing the spiritual axiosphere through certain mental constructs (concepts) in the discourses of ideologically diverse magazines leads to the need to indicate the ideological and aesthetic essence of their value confrontation and determine the basic concepts of cognitive-narrative analysis.

On the one hand, there are publications focused on Western liberal democratic ideals (The Banner), on the other hand, radical, opposition magazines conducting the ideology of national

conservatism that support traditional values (The Contemporary). Thus, each of the above print publications will adhere to specific strategies for axiological identification of the addressee.

If cognitive strategies are understood as some kind of “patterns of choosing how to solve cognition problems to achieve certain goals” (Pavlov, 2006, p. 62), then the following definition can be given in relation to this study: these are discursively conditioned mental attitudes aimed at processing information in order to design a certain worldview and its fragments. Narrative patterns from a linguistic point of view can be interpreted as supertexts concentrated around a specific event-topic (Sheigal, 2007). From a cognitive point of view, narratives are typified stories that are combined by a common subject-thematic field and practices of exploiting knowledge and experience in the form of a set of speech actions that is stable and reproducible in different communicative conditions: lexical and grammatical expression, sequence of events, positions of the subject of speech (Akimoto, 2019). For example, Labov (2011) notes that people transmit personal experiences through stories. But not only can personal experience become the subject of a narrative as a form of communication, but also the collective experience receives narrative representation (Wertsch, 2002). Thus, narrative patterns, which become the basis for building specific texts in the discourse of “thick” literary magazines, expose collective experience, values, ideals, offer a “ready” scenario for their perception.

4. Purpose of the Study

In order to define cognitive strategies and narrative patterns for spiritual values in two types of journalistic discourse determined by various discursive conventions, we addressed the “spiritual” metaconcept as a very significant, authentic mental unit in conditions of value pluralism and relativism. The comparative analysis will make it possible to identify cognitions characteristic of each type of discourse (mental-linguistic representations of values) and narratives (discursively defined patterns of telling stories about personal and collective experiences), as well as to indicate value dominants, dynamics of discursive development of the axiological reality.

5. Research Methods

The concept of mental education, which has a complex cognitive organization (in our case, the concept of “spiritual”) has become a methodological tool for studying the texts of the chosen print media. The concept is methodologically relevant to the description of value transformations, since it has a nuclear-peripheral organization: the core of the structure is central, invariant sense components characterized by semantic stability, and peripheral elements have a weakened, mediated (often associative, metaphorical, etymological, etc.) semantic connection with the center. The principle of field structuring of the concept is supported by the absolute majority of Russian linguistic concept developers. To fix certain value-sense transformations through cognitive strategies, a common-language (i.e. restored according to historical and modern dictionaries) concept model is first designed, then discursive models with the aim to further compare and determine the sense dynamics.

The logical continuation of cognitive analysis was narrative, which allows establishing with the help of what narrative mechanisms the manifestation of value-sense attitudes, what “ready” scenarios of

perception the discourse of a particular publication offers. To identify patterns, a general subject-thematic field is modeled around which a concentration of texts occurs, and a set of speech actions aimed at deploying the semantic components of the concept: lexical and grammatical expression, sequence of events, position of the subject of speech.

6. Findings

The general language model of the “spiritual” concept:

- nuclear meanings: 1) “everything related to thinking, intellectual abilities of a person”; 2) “everything related to moral characteristics of consciousness”; 3) “everything connected in the emotional-volitional sphere of personality”; 4) “anything very important related to higher value orientations, opposed to material, external”. Thus, the above value meanings unite an integrative cognitive trait – “a characteristic of consciousness, thinking, mental abilities, which determines the orientation, quality of a person’s spiritual life”. This is a natural consequence of atheistic understanding of spirituality;
- circumnuclear zone: 1) “related to the moral strength of a person or a team, willpower, degree of manifestation of intent”; 2) “related to faith in the existence of supernatural forces governing the fate of a person”; 3) “connected with religion, church as social institutions in the activities of which the individual can be active”. The second and third cognitive signs indicate the syncreticism of consciousness of a modern person, organically and consistently combining pagan, passive-fatalistic and at the same time religious-institutional, activist-Orthodox views;
- peripheral part: 1) “essence of something, its characteristic property, substance”; 2) “related to breathing, vitality, the presence of life”. Thus, the content of the periphery is ambivalent: on the one hand, the first value emphasizes abstraction, phenomenology and fundamentality of the ‘spiritual’, but on the other hand, the second cognitive sign is associated with specifically sensual, vital semantics.

Let us move to a discursive implementation of concepts. A total of 484 presenting text units were found from the entire array of journalistic texts contained in “thick” magazines over 2016 by a continuous sampling method: 371 contexts – in *The Banner*, 113 – in *The Contemporary*; 14 discursive-semantic features were identified in both magazines. Quantitative indicators convincingly illustrate the leading positions of *The Banner* according to the first criterion, however, both editions converge in the number of discursive meanings, and this makes it possible to draw preliminary conclusions: 1) *The Banner* magazine implements an innovative way of analyzing value reality – this is evidenced by the number of contexts that exceed the same indicators in another magazine more than three times; 2) *The Contemporary* chooses a conservative way of comprehending the value reality: a relatively small number of text units expressing a value idea refers to tightness, the fundamental closeness of the communicative-constructing space, within which the value reflection is carried out and new cognitive features are generated.

In terms of the qualitative indicators, let us first present the nuclear-peripheral model of the concept of “spiritual” in the discourse of *The Banner*:

- nuclear meanings: 1) “related to experiences, feelings, mood, emotions, in general, to the sensual perception of the world” (62 text units); 2) “something related to constant aspirations,

intentions, personal desires, relentless searches that contribute to its transformation, renewal” (60); 3) “related to mental characteristics of a person, his consciousness; the intangible beginning that all living beings possess, contrasted with external” (53). As can be observed from the comparison of the common-language and discursive models, their nuclear zones coincided in only one cognitive feature – the third. The sensory-emotional comprehension of the spiritual came to the fore, which testifies to the value-meaning transformations of the concept: the “spiritual” from the domains of the “cognitive-intellectual sphere” and the “moral sphere” moves to the domain of the “sensory-emotional sphere”. This is consistent with postmodern sensitivity, proclaiming primacy of sensations, epistemological uncertainty and the rejection of rationalism, any stable criteria for orientation. With reference to the above, let us highlight experiences (sensuality/emotion) as a cognitive strategy for the discursive transformation of the considered value. The second sign introduces the meaning of intention, desirability, the intentions themselves, aspirations are a substantive feature of the “spiritual”, they are real, not virtual. They characterize the spiritual personality as a wanderer, a nomad who needs a more “eternal” search than the outcome. Thus, the true, ultimate, often unrecognized and uncontrolled purpose of spiritual aspirations of a person experiencing a shortage of spiritual practices is a turbulent state as a self-valuable phenomenon. Therefore, we highlight the following strategies for transforming the concept: intentionality and nomadicity; deficiency (a state caused by the lack of spiritual practices) and tranquility (a state of dynamics, search, anxiety). The state of anxiety extends to the inner world of the subject himself, since he is puzzled by the search for higher guidelines primarily in Himself, and not in the Other (and not in God), and in this sense his spiritual searches are subjective, self-centric, hermetic, extrareligious, since they “concentrate” on the individual himself – let us highlight egocentricity/subjectivity; tightness; extrareligiosity as cognitive strategies for discursive construction of this value;

- near-nuclear zone: 1) “related to inspiration, a sense of mental uplift; imbued with sublime experiences, feelings” (41). This sign defines “spiritual” as a condition of enthusiasm, inspiration, admiration, cathartic experience, in this connection it is possible to talk about catharticity as the transforming strategy of a discursive conception of value. The cathartic, enthusiastic reflection of objects of creative activity by the consciousness of a spiritual personality has a pronounced positive assessment, and the positive connotation becomes part of the expanding denotative field, therefore let us highlight another strategy of discursive representation – positive evaluativity; 2) “a collection of the most important specific cultural features of something; the internal meaning of something, its essence; core, foundation of something” (34); 3) “something created in a pattern, resembling something” (32). The second and third circumnuclear signs, as well as the first, are not among the basic in the general language model, while they emphasize the fundamentalizing essence of the concept under consideration, which is very important for “thick” magazines, which is that the “spiritual” acts as the basis of conceptual universality, space-time commonality, therefore let us highlight

fundamentality as a reconfigurative strategy of this value field; 4) “associated with moral, intellectual, aesthetic development of the world, often finding an internal response” (27).

In this context, we will not indicate the periphery, since it is not informative in terms of cognitive modification.

Thus, in the process of discursive modeling of the value of “spiritual” *The Banner* involved nine transforming cognitive strategies, which indicates a radical reform of the value content. Intentionality turns out to be a constitutional feature of spiritual consciousness, since it gives the activity of a person a certain qualitative orientation, aspiration, the ultimate goal of which is not so much the achievement of the intended result, but a dynamic, turbulent, already valuable state of a nomad personality seeking spiritual significance, experiencing a shortage of spiritual practices and feeling the inferiority of being without them.

The model of the nuclear concept in the discourse of *The Contemporary* contains the following hierarchically organized signs:

- semantic center: 1) “associated with moral, intellectual, aesthetic development of the world, often finding an internal response” (23 text units); 2) “related to religion, religious rituals, religious paraphernalia, mystical” (22). Thus, one can state religiosity as a cognitive strategy of discursive transformation, since the second meaning took a strong position in the core (in the general language model it is located in the near-nuclear zone), while it is important that a spiritual personality shows his intents and activity exclusively in the church-religious sphere;
- nuclear zone: 1) “related to the mental characteristics of a person, his consciousness, the intangible origin that all living beings possess, opposed to external” (14); 2) “related to experiences, feelings, mood, emotions, in general, to the sensual perception of the world” (12).

Thus, only one cognitive reconfiguration strategy was identified, following the otherwise common language value model, as well as an appeal to the categories of the “Russian soul”, “Russian being” within the framework of the philosophy of the “Russian idea” (this is indicated by the context) make it possible to conclude the following: the nuclear concept of “spiritual” is translated in its pre-revolutionary state, since Orthodox religious significance is in a vanguard; a spiritual personality does not doubt anything and is not looking for anything, since it has already found everything, it relies on the axiosphere developed by Russian history, Russian literature, and the motive of the path is not typical for it. All this allows concluding that the magazine turns to a socially oriented, sociocentric way of building identity through a cathedral personality.

Narrativization of the concept of “spiritual” in *The Banner* and *The Contemporary* is as follows.

The Banner implements the concept of “spiritual” in a narrative model based on a story about strong feeling, shock or experience, which make you feel intense emotions, make discoveries that give creative inspiration, and emphasize the procedural nature of this moment. Quite often the activity belongs not to the subject of speech (a narrator, a storyteller), but to a certain extraneous force. Here there is no religious-mythological semantics of the “inspiration from above”. These are often cultural phenomena, people, events, what is felt by ordinary senses or perceived by the mind. On the other hand, we can note a small number of lexical units with a figurative meaning, purely poetic semantics, but they, which is indicative of postmodern discourse, are updated in ironic modus using specific common details: “features of a young man with an inspired combed backward hair”. Thus, a scenario is formed in which the

moment of experience, and not knowledge or gaining final knowledge, comes to the fore when constructing a text, the traditional romantic idea of inspiration is deconstructed.

A narrative model was also used, updating to a greater extent the values of the near-nuclear zone. The authors of *The Banner* reproduce the mental-cognitive situation of confusion, the loss of the transcendent absolute. The proposed model as if refers to some precedent situation, appeals to the common knowledge to explain the phenomena of life in a situation of relativism: “in the spirit of underground”, “personified spirit of the empire”, etc. The next narrative pattern in frequency coincides with the zone of the far periphery: “related to the moral strength of someone or something, the ability/inability of someone to confront circumstances, hardships” and a “human unit”. It is based on the separation of personality from the historical process, its individualization. Here, on the one hand, the “plot” is used about the collision of the hero with cruel and indifferent world, and on the other – stories about the action of social and cultural conventions, which exist objectively as part of the organization of life itself.

Thus, in the discourse of *The Banner* magazine the narrative pattern, in which spiritual represents a private experience, feeling, and process functions to explain an appeal to case phenomena.

In the discourse of *The Contemporary* magazine the narrative representation of the concept of “spiritual” reveals a different pattern. It is significant, but almost absent procedural as a characteristic of everything related to spiritual, tightness is formed, rejection of development and movement, search. The narrative pattern, which manifests the acceptance and comprehension of some aspect of the spiritual, comes to the fore. A situation arises when the result is more important than the process itself, which determines the stability, connection of the individual with traditions and norms: “magazine of the Russian spirit.” The narrative is built as a description of personal qualities, as a set or a list.

In this regard, the semantic component from the field “religion” emphasizes a ready-made choice, the spiritual one is objectified (“food”, “rules”, “traditions”, “spiritual instruments”), i.e. what is consumed, interiors or through which is accepted.

The most frequent also include a narrative model in which the intensity of experience, the strength of feeling, and the activation of the spirit are presented: “they joyfully and inspired supported the return of Crimea”. Antithesis is actualized here, which contrasts the spiritual and spiritless in the religious, moral and ethical aspects.

Thus, in the discourse of *The Contemporary* the narrative patterns represent the concept of “spiritual” as a norm, a phenomenon that must be accepted, comprehended, and the connection of personality and conventionally established spiritual principles is emphasized.

7. Conclusion

The quantitative and qualitative analysis of cognitive strategies for the construction of the concept of “spiritual” in the discourses of two ideologically and aesthetically different “thick” magazines – *The Banner* and *The Contemporary* – make it possible to state a person-oriented, egocentric type of identity building through a nomad personality in the first edition and a sociocentric way of building identity through a cathedral personality in the second.

The narrative representation of the concept of “spiritual” in the discourses of *The Banner* and *The Contemporary* found different models of speech practices. On the one hand, the absence of a norm, the ultimate truth, which leads to a story about personal experience and feelings, and the connection of personality and society is constructed through an appeal to a recognizable situation, spiritual becomes a process. On the other hand, the story of the adoption of a spiritual norm, its assimilation and comprehension prevails.

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