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

# LINGUOPRAGMATIC ASPECT OF INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION

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### *Abstract*

The article deals with some aspects of linguopragmatic interpretation of interpersonal interaction in the context of intercultural communication. Linguo-pragmatics as one of the dominant areas of communicative-functional, student-centered linguistics is considered as a discipline that describes and explains language as an activity as well as an opportunity to represent language in dynamics, in the processes of its functioning. The problems of intercultural communication, which originated from the idea of "dialogue of cultures" of different peoples and different social communities, have shifted to the level of interpersonal cultural communication and have gained practical meaning. The present stage of historical development finds the ability to establish an intercultural dialogue between representatives of different ethnic groups and different state systems being of particular importance. Therefore, the formation of language skills, primarily while studying foreign languages, stands for assimilating not merely the rules of employing units at all levels of the language system, but also the normative and usual rules of speech behavior in accordance with the laws of the cultural space to which the language personality belongs. Cross-cultural interaction involves understanding the need for interdependence of the goals that both interlocutors intend to achieve as a result of communication. One of the most important principles in teaching intercultural communication is the principle of transition from communicative ethnocentrism to communicative ethnorelativity, i.e. willingness to communicate with representatives of another culture, openness and the urge for interaction and mutual understanding.

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## 1. Introduction

Modern historiography features a large number of reviews and analytical publications, covering the development of the linguistic science in the twentieth century and testifying to its diversity and multi-aspect. This is explained by the fact that the study of language is considered as an international, interdisciplinary, intercultural and above all humanitarian science (Jadir, 2018). Both linguistic pragmatics and intercultural communication are disciplines that received their independent scientific status in the second half of the twentieth century (Ladmiral & Lipiansky 2015). Currently, linguistic pragmatics (or pragmalinguistics) is one of the dominant trends in linguistics "because any linguistic research implies a pragmatic aspect" (Moeschler, 2018, p. 192), studying the communicative and functional properties of language material, generally defining its subject of research, goals and tasks of studying language, forming its conceptual and terminological apparatus. Pragmatics thus makes it possible to account for the processes that are not specifically linguistic while interpreting statements (Bracops 2015). Russian studies feature the most common definition is that of pragmalinguistics as a discipline "that includes a set of questions related to the subject speaking, the addressee, their interaction in the process of communication, and the communication situation" (Arutyunova, 2002, p. 389). Susov (2009) claims the pragmatic aspect implies studying those actions performed by

subjects of language communication, which suggest:

- a) speakers produce utterances that implement not only certain propositional contents, but also communicative intentions (intents) from signs belonging to this language system, taking into account the specific conditions of communication);
- b) communication participants interpret these statements in order to understand both literal meanings and non – literal meanings based on the principles of communication.

(Susov, 2009, p. 53)

When considering the problems of intercultural communication, we should rely on the fact that changes of a social, political, and economic nature the world has been facing in recent years lead to an increase in inter-ethnic, interstate, and interpersonal contacts of people who are representatives of different ethnic cultures. Real processes of cross-cultural interaction are carried out in various situations of contact between individuals, essentially defining the prototypical nature of cross-cultural communication.

## 2. Problem Statement

Communication, including cross-cultural communication, is an ambiguous and heterogeneous phenomenon. Any act of communicative interaction should be considered as a communicative act or a communicative event that takes place in a certain communicative situation, within which the communicative intention of the participants in the speech interaction is realized.

When considering the problems of intercultural communication, it should be borne in mind that the carriers of culture are individuals, specific persons, and intercultural interaction is realized between different people-carriers of various ethnic cultures. Contacts are made directly between the subjects of communication: the addresser and the recipient, and are therefore manifested primarily in the form of

interpersonal communication. This is the process of transmitting and receiving information, encouraging the interlocutor to perform actions, supporting the intention to change their views, and revealing the desire to provide emotional support. Thus, the problems of intercultural communication, originating from the idea of "dialogue of cultures" of different peoples and different social communities, have moved to the level of interpersonal cultural communication and have developed practical meaning.

Famous researchers of linguo-cultural and linguistic peculiarities of the Russian language Vereshchagin and Kostomarov (1990) emphasized the fact that two national cultures never completely coincide with each other, each of them is woven from national and international elements. The set of coinciding (international) and diverging (national) units for each pair of comparable cultures will be different (Vereshchagin & Kostomarov, 1990), primarily due to the fact that different ethnic cultures may abide by different values. Ethnic culture is understood as "the combination of cultural heritage items inherent to a given ethnic group or its individual representative, regardless of whether the various elements and structures of these items have a specific ethnic coloring or are ethnically neutral" (Timasheva, 2017, p.105). Each ethnic culture has its own unique features associated with various areas of life, including very specific ones. For example, the peculiarities of the country's historical heritage and accepted communication norms impose restrictions on certain topics of conversation. Thus, it is better not to talk to the French about the Second World War (especially the occupation), and it is not customary to discuss their civil war with the Spaniards. In Russia, you can safely ask about the level of income, and in the United States, such a question will cause indignation. Some countries do not have this stereotype – there are no forbidden topics of conversation in Australia.

Natural differences between cultures lead to certain communication barriers, cause tension, nervousness, which leads to a lack of understanding concerning the verbal and non-verbal behavior of the other side. The primary task of research in the field of intercultural communication is to identify the features of organizing intercultural contacts, to identify the causes of communication failures, and to establish mechanisms for conflict-free communication.

### **3. Research Questions**

Differences between cultures result in the fact that representatives of different cultures have different perceptions and understanding of the messages received. This can be explained by the personal social and psychological characteristics (status, age, cognitive, emotional ones) of communicants, and the difficulties determined by the features of verbal and nonverbal behavior. Differences in cultures lead to the fact that representatives of different cultures have different ways of decrypting and interpreting the messages received.

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

The purpose of the research is to analyze and interpret some aspects of intercultural communication that dominate the interaction of people of different cultures and languages, and contribute to conflict-free interaction.

## 5. Research Methods

The article employs the descriptive-analytical method and the method of theoretical interpretation.

## 6. Findings

The linguistic and cultural diversity of the modern world with different national and cultural traditions and customs, values and moral guidelines not only adds to advantages of interethnic, interstate and interpersonal interaction, but also implies certain difficulties. The effectiveness of intercultural communication is determined by one of its main postulates: on the one hand, everyone should be aware of their roots, identity and belonging to a particular culture, on the other hand, it is necessary to show respect for representatives of other cultures, realizing their right to be different.

Communication between two or more subjects is an interactive (dialogic) process in which people of different cultures participate expressing their own worldview, enjoying different communicative and life experiences, different habits and behaviors (Petitjean & Doehler, 2017). At the same time, participation in any communicative event of an intercultural nature involves combining personal subjective speech and non-speech actions of communicants, who expect each other to respond in accordance with the established tasks and goals. These actions are interrelated and contribute to a certain communication activity within the framework of a contact. It should be noted that messages-statements are not always unambiguous. Often, communicants build their message in such a way that the form is directed at the interlocutor, while the content reflects the interests of addresser. Such messages can serve as a certain obstacle to conflict-free communication.

Cross-cultural communication is a type of interaction between two or more intelligent actors, first, taking each other's positions into account, and second, striving for at least one common goal: to jointly address a particular challenge, that is, to agree. This lays the groundwork for a successful, primarily conflict-free communication, on the basis of which communicants should be able to recognize personally significant meanings in each specific situation (in a specific social context), to coordinate the semantic orientation of communicative (speech and non-speech) actions in their situational context. The vast majority of communication is through language.

From this point of view, language communication is to a certain extent an organized, orderly process. It is not enough for the implementation of a communicative exchange that the interlocutors speak in turn. It is necessary that they address each other, that is, they are included in the exchange and indicate this mutual inclusion, using various metacommunicative means and signals of an interlocative nature (fatications on the part of the speaker and regulatory actions on the part of the listener) (Ryzhova, 2015, p. 209). These signals, both verbal or non-verbal (look, facial expressions, gestures, poses), exchanged by interlocutors, add to expressing mutual recognition or non-recognition of each other as communication partners, influencing each other. Thus, a dialogue is born, that is, the message of the addresser finds a response (positive or negative) from the addressee and the interaction finds its continuation (Marian, et al., 2017; Traverso, 2017). The exchange of these signals can be considered as a universal rule, as a communicative norm of conversation, which is based on the principle of interaction. The interactive process is considered as a unity of inter-individual relations which combines, according to André-

Larochebouvy (1984) all cases of intersection and contact of two or more individuals, including those signs (verbal and nonverbal) of mutual attention that they exchange. Moreover, the absence of these signs is as significant as their presence (André-Larochebouvy, 1984).

Indeed, communication usually implies a large amount of simultaneously (synchronously) sent information through different channels. It is necessary to know, how the words work like the adjuvants of the polemicist; how these words are detonators, weapons of war or peace (Lozachmeur, 2016). In addition to verbal messages, these are also gestures, facial expressions, and intonation. This includes turning the head, and moving the eyebrows up to express surprise, to show interest in what has been said or claim that something is not clear, to frown; to produce short utterances (Yes, Yes, Yes, or uh-huh). If all these messages are consistent with what is being conveyed in words, there are no problems. But if the words say one thing ("glad to see you" or "very nice", "nice to meet you", etc.), but the posture, frowning, unfriendly look, timbre of voice, sluggish handshake, lowered corners of the lips, nervousness, fussiness, haste attend to another, it is unlikely to develop a favorable relationship for further communication.

Of course, an optimal conversation sees the so-called "active listening" as the most acceptable form of behavior. That is when the recipient of the message reacts to the words of the speaker with a tilt of the head, facial expressions, restrained gestures, etc. You can disagree with some statements, but the "active listener" should not interrupt the speaker with their value judgments or repeat what is said in an indignant way, that is, the listener should be patient, respectful to what is being said. And even when the listener needs to express their point of view, they must be mild in their expressions and make the statement strictly on the topic, being polite and providing weighty arguments to support their views. The statement should be formed in the way that it supports the desire to continue the conversation and to maintain contact in the future. The task is challenging, because the slightest inaccuracy in expressing opinion can result in a communication failure or a subsequent aggressive reaction, that is, can become a serious obstacle to the continuation of relations, including those of a non-cultural nature.

Naturally, in the context of intercultural communication, its participants should not use certain language options and discursive strategies that will not contribute to the development of effective dialogic discourse and the continuation of business or friendly relations. This fact indicates the speaker's destructive behavior. The communicative strategy of confrontation is implemented in the process of communication through communicative tactics represented by speech actions, which can be designated by illocutive verbs that more or less emotionally express a negative or neutral-indifferent attitude to the content of the statement or even to the partner himself. The strategy of confrontation includes several communication tactics such as the following: undisguised aggression, "soft" aggression, and hidden aggression.

## **1. VERBS THAT IMPLEMENT THE TACTICS OF UNDISGUISED AGGRESSION**

1) Threaten (menacer)

accuse (accuser)

expose; oppose (dénoncer)

frighten (effrayer)

warn (avertir)

forewarn (mettre en garde).

- 2) Order, command (commander, ordonner)  
demand (exiger)  
demand; assert your right to something (revendiquer)  
lead (diriger)
- 3) Lecture (faire la leçon ou la morale)  
reproach (reprocher)  
reproach (récriminer/contredire)  
reprimand, make a suggestion (éprimander)
- 4) Judge, condemn (juger, donner tort)  
blame (blâmer)  
denounce, expose (dénoncer)  
criticize (critiquer)
- 5) Ridicule (ridiculiser)  
shame (faire honte)  
taunt (se moquer)  
evaluate pejoratively (qualifier péjorativement).

Performing actions of this kind (the list of illocutive verbs can be continued), the speaker risks getting the same unfriendly response. This is a direct path to conflict, to ending the conversation. Even if such behavior of one of the participants is suspended and neutralized, undesirable consequences will remain: there will be no efficient business, and even more so friendly relations, at least in the near future.

## **2. VERBS THAT IMPLEMENT TACTICS OF "SOFT" AGGRESSION:**

- 1) Persuade (persuader, assigeg)  
Provide arguments (argumenter)  
explain (expliquer)  
generalize (généraliser)
- 2) Advise (conseiller)  
suggest, suggest (suggérer)  
offer a solution (proposer des solutions)  
teach, instruct (enseigner)
- 3) Analyze (analyser)  
interpret (interpréter)  
psychologize, ruminate (psychologiser)  
diagnose (diagnostiquer)
- 4) not to take something to the heart (prendre à la légère)  
evade a direct answer (éluder)  
distract, entertain (distraindre, faire diversion)  
joke (blaguer, plaisanter),

Speech actions indicated by illocutive verbs of this group can also act as a kind of hindrance, an obstacle to the normal flow of conversation and even for the continuation of relationships. Outwardly, it would seem that one of the communicants expresses concern, provides arguments, gives advice, tries to

comfort the interlocutor with a joke. And if the interlocutor's opinion appears of relevance, then such a reaction is not satisfactory, because it proves that the one who is expressing the views is not taken seriously or understood. Next time, it is unlikely that the communication between these two people is going to be established especially when it comes to some relevant issues.

### **3. VERBS THAT IMPLEMENT HIDDEN AGGRESSION TACTICS:**

1) Ask, question (questionner, interroger)

2) Comfort, reassure (rassurer, consoler)

Express sympathy (sympathiser)

assist, support (soutenir).

3) Congratulate (féliciter)

approve, (approuver)

praise (louer, vanter )

Make compliments (complimenter)

flatter (flatter).

It would seem that the actions indicated by the verbs that comprise this group should not interfere with the implementation of the communication process in the proper tone, which is polite and respectful. But this usually happens when the statement corresponds to the situation, reflects the true intentions of the speaker, and most importantly, meets the expectations of the communication participants. If such actions take place in situations that do not correspond to the circumstances of communication, they can provoke a discord in the relationship and, possibly, the interruption of contact. In this case, they implement tactics of hidden aggression, because even employed in a kind, sympathetic manner, they trigger embarrassment, bewilderment, frustration, hopelessness, resentment in the person to whom they are addressed to. This is because this person is aware that they are not understood or there is no way to be understood for them, others do not delve into the problem, although they want to seem nice. In other words, a communicative action (verbal or nonverbal) as a means of achieving a goal and possessing a certain illocutionary force does not contribute to the effectiveness of a communicative action, since it does not correspond to the communicative strategy and conditions for effective interaction. At the same time, the desire to create a new reality in regard to the moment of interaction and the purpose of speech contradicts the actual needs of its participants, their motives and expectations.

Thus, as a result of studying the communicative actions indicated by illocutive verbs that implement the strategy of confrontation in the process of communication, it was found that their illocutive potential is not the same. Actions of threat always have a stronger negative impact on the partner than those of condemnation or protest, and compliments always have a more positive effect on the listener than something aimed to convince the other or make fun of them. In any case, these communicative actions do not allow constructive interaction between partners.

In this regard, it is particularly important to master different types and forms of interethnic and interpersonal communication, which linguistics calls intercultural communication. It is based on the phenomenon of communicative competence, understood as a unity of linguistic, discursive, referential and socio-cultural components. The combination of these components contributes to the essentials of

linguistic pragmatics, since "the pragmatic aspects are embedded in the language system, and the language system contains all the prescriptions for their possible uses" (Moeschler & Reboul, 1994, p. 30).

The concept of communicative competence is directly related to the concept of performance as the implementation of a speech act in the context in which the speaker's competence or more broadly — communicative competence is actualized, that is, the background knowledge and ability to organize and produce the speech act (Armengaud, 2007; Neveu, 2020). The importance of understanding and taking these components into account in situations of cross-cultural interaction is doubtless.

Any contact between two or more communicants is defined as intersubjective interaction, which presupposes a common goal and a meaningful orientation of the communicative actions being exchanged, determining the very possibility of interaction between people and acting as a general condition for interaction, implemented in accordance with the rules of behavior that determine what participants in the interaction must do to act (for example, by the means of language), meaningfully / reasonably / rationally, that is, understandable.

The pragmalinguistic interpretation of communicative actions within the framework of intercultural communication requires the study of language material not only for the sake of the language itself, but also in inseparable connection with a person, with his consciousness and thinking, spiritual life and culture, that is, not just as a means of interpersonal interaction, but also as a way to reflect the world around and the place of a person in this world.

## **7. Conclusion**

In conclusion, it should be noted that the results of the pragmalinguistic analysis of communicative actions and their discursive-contextual interpretation allow us to assert that intercultural interaction implies an understanding of the need for interdependence of the goals of participants in the communicative process. It also should be noted that each of the participants pursues personal goals that are to be achieved in the process of communication through the communicative actions: to control the consciousness of the recipient of information to act on it. This is the key principle of managing meanings and the content of interaction. This principle implies that every case of human interaction that relies on some order calls for a set of communicative behavioral patterns. In this case, the behavior of each participant to interaction is built as a sequence of appropriate, from their point of view, communicative actions.

Nevertheless, the condition for effective interaction is the coordination of communicative actions of all participants to the interaction process, which implies an understanding of the interlocutor's actions and intentions. This is a complex and difficult to realize aspect of communication, especially when it comes to cross-cultural one. Still, having some universal values and behavioral responses, people develop the ability to anticipate the behavior and actions of another person. By engaging in interaction, the speaker, possessing some intentions, gives meaning to relatively transparent behavioral acts, and in the process of exchanging communicative actions forms their own view of others' behavior and in accordance with this — their own pattern of behavior.

Anticipating and decoding interaction signals allows you to choose response behavior strategies, as well as interactive strategies that are most suitable for the contact.



Naturally, difficulties of intercultural nature are unavoidable, primarily due to different interpretations of behavioral acts in different cultures, but this is also an experience — the experience of failures in communication. Here it is important to understand that the foreign world of meanings is grasped in the correlation to the world of meanings in the native culture. The more often are the meetings with a foreign culture, a foreign way of life, the more clearly people realize the specific features of their own culture and, therefore, the deeper the understanding of behaviors in another culture (Ryjova, 2015, pp. 267–272). This exemplifies another principle of communicative interaction — the principle of transition from communicative ethnocentrism to communicative ethnorelativity in the speech and non-speech behavior of speakers. In other words, it is a readiness and openness to communicate with a carrier of a different culture, that is the foundation of successful, primarily conflict-free communication, on the basis of which communication partners recognize each other's personally determined meanings in a social context and coordinate the semantic and emotional-expressive orientation of their communicative actions.

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