


Linguaculturology as an Optimal Approach in Studying Foreign Languages in a Multicultural Diverse Classroom


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Abstract: We live in the age of globalization where diverse cultures and nations mix and mingle. A lot of us live in a multicultural society in which macro- and microethnoses coexist. Cultures enrich each other, collaborate...and sometimes clash. Misunderstandings happen when people speak the same language, but do not share the same cultural codes. Edward Sapir, father of Sapir-Whorf "linguistic relativity theory" stated that "every cultural pattern and every single act of social behavior involve communication in either an explicit or an implicit sense." In the core of any successful verbal or nonverbal communication lays "a shared code," which contains mutual knowledge of traditions, culture, context, and connotations. Thus, by just mastering a grammatical structure and obtaining an extensive vocabulary it is not enough for a foreigner/language learner. "Foreign languages should be taught as the inseparable unity of the world and culture of the people speaking those languages," claims Svetlana Ter-Minasova, professor at Lomonosov Moscow State University. That is why we see the linguacultural approach in teaching foreign languages could be the solution and the remedy helping to avoid misunderstandings. Linguaculturology is a relatively new type of synthetic, scientific discipline which offers the most harmonious and synergetic approach in studying foreign languages and helping avoid cultural misunderstanding. It commenced at the intersection of culturology (cultural anthropology), ethnolinguistics, sociolinguistics, and cognitive linguistics. Linguaculturology as a metascience seeks to understand the world of human culture, not as a set of isolated facts, but gives a systematic description of facts in language and culture, studies their mutual connection and interaction in their functioning and reflecting the process as a holistic structure. This article demonstrates how the linguacultural approach, its methods and strategies can help educators to overcome challenges in a diverse and multicultural classroom, while making the learning process more inclusive and culturally aligned.

Keywords: Multicultural, Communication, Ethnos, Linguoculturology, Bilingualism

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Introduction

The era of globalization has led to a mixture of cultures and nations, so that in the space of one macroethnos, numerous microethnoses coexist, developing and interacting. In a multicultural space, the language of a macroethnos, as a rule, becomes a means of communication. But communication in the language of the prevailing language group becomes insufficient and intercultural misunderstandings often occur. The realization of the culture phenomenon happens when you learn to use a non-native language. We discover there is not one culture, or that every culture unfolds in multiple layers of subcultures. It is obvious that simply knowing the grammatical structure of the language and having an extensive vocabulary is not enough to achieve mutual understanding.

In English there is a word "alien". It means both an alien and a foreigner. That is, another country is another planet, another world, another culture. And in this other culture there are other values, and other rules, other traditions, other memes, a different way of life, other gestures. For example, 'diversity and inclusion' is one of the most important priorities especially in US metropolitan areas and universities. The fusion of numerous cultures, religions, ethnic groups and languages in a seething melting pot requires close attention, analysis and tactics to avoid misunderstandings and conflicts.

Culture and Language

“Cultures run around the planet like so many billiard balls, self-contained objects that might collide or bounce off the cushion but still retain that perfect shape.” (Michael Agar, 2002)

According to E. Sapir, "every cultural system and every single act of social behavior explicitly or implicitly implies communication." (Edward Sapir, 1935) Communication is the process of interaction (verbal or non-verbal). Each communication is based on a mutual “shared code”, i.e., mutual knowledge of realities, memes, context. In both mono- and multicultural space, the main means of transmitting information and achieving mutual understanding is language.

Language is a transmitter, a conductor of culture; it itself already contains cultural and worldview codes that form the personality of its bearer, its identity. A native speaker already at a subconscious genetic level receives knowledge about his own culture. But a foreigner who has studied and mastered the language at a decent level does not obtain this cultural knowledge.

W. von Humboldt stated that “the sum of all words, language is a world lying between the world external

phenomena and the inner world of a human <...>; studying language reveals to us, in addition to its own use, also, an analogy between man and the world in general and every nation that expresses itself in language” (Wilhelm von Humboldt, 1960). According to Humboldt, language is the repository of the national spirit, culture, "the united spiritual energy of the people, miraculously imprinted in certain sounds" (Wilhelm von Humboldt, 1960).

Language always embodies the originality of the people, their visions of the world, their native culture. "Studying the languages of the world," emphasized W. Humboldt, "- this is also the world history of thoughts and feelings of humanity. It should describe the people of all countries and all degrees of cultural development; it should include everything which concerns a person". (Wilhelm Humboldt, 1960).

Clash and Merge of Lingua Cultures

Now more than ever, we feel the clash of worlds, cultures, and spiritual values. G.D. Gachev wrote that “at the junction of languages, the most acute clash of lifestyles and material and spiritual cultures is expressed - but a clash that occurs not just in life, but at the level of consciousness, understanding of life” (G.D. Gachev, 1988, c.36).

There are different microcultures within one monolingual group, and it is very easy to perceive situations or to get misunderstood using the same language even with people out of the same cultural or social cluster. We think of culture as something which belongs to a particular group of people. “Culture starts when you realize that you`ve got a problem with language, and the problem has to do with who you are.” (Michael Agar, 2002).

As educators, in the beginning of our careers, we think that nothing is easier than to translate and explain new words or concepts. We think that the meanings lay there, on the surface of our visual minds, floating in the field of our awareness. And then we start to explain well-known words and concepts and see several possibilities you never thought about. Thus, trying to explain our native tongue concepts, we get the gift of looking at our native language through the prism of a new complex awareness. Comprehension of different cultural aspects changes us into educators who can navigate the multicultural classroom nowadays.

Linguaculturology or Cultural Linguistics

The problem of interpersonal and intercultural contacts and linguistic worldview was and is being dealt with by such scientists as V. Hanks, G. Urban, M. Agar, J. Lucy, R. Langaker, E. Sapir, B. Whorf, G. Gachev, Ch. Fillmore, and E. Erickson. Linguaculturology, or cultural linguistics as a metascience offers methods for solving the above problems in teaching foreign languages. This is confirmed by the continuing contribution to cultural linguistics by such scientists as C. Pierce, G. Palmer (G. Palmer 1996), the founder of the linguaculturology school V. Vorobyov, S. Ter-Minasova , and many others.

If we take a closer look and take in account parameters such as volume of semantics, stylistic connotations, and lexical compatibility, we would draw a conclusion that equivalency of languages doesn't exist. Word as a unit of language corresponds with a certain item or a phenomenon of a real world. But those items or phenomena could be different in various cultures. Cultural concepts of those items and phenomena will be different as they exist and function in different worlds and cultures. Linguaculturology as a metascience seeks to understand the world of human culture, not as a set of isolated facts. It gives a systematic description of facts about language and culture, studies their mutual connection and interaction and their functioning and reflecting the process as a holistic structure of units. Linguaculturology is a metalinguistic science which gives a systematic description of the facts of the language and culture in their interaction. Thus, cultural linguistics or linguaculturology originated at the intersection of related sciences such as cultural studies, anthropology, linguistic regional studies, sociolinguistics, ethnography and cognitive linguistics. But this branch of science has its own special character, and special “integrative aspect” of studying the subject of language and culture.

Newspeak

Also, when translating from the native into the second language and vice versa, a new language is created, and reached with new signed connotations, memes, images and memes of the area where new variation of the new language (third dimension) Newspeak is born. The introduction of slang and dialect words should also be considered in order to understand the process of the emergence of the Newspeak. Thus, we deal no longer with a binary, but at least a three-part relationship between the native language, the new country tongue and the neologized variation of the native language.

In courses of foreign culture, cultural and historical images often remain misunderstood, adjusted to the tracing paper of universal world standards, or to their usual perception of being. Thus, there happens to be a substitution of concepts. Our students nod their heads knowingly but laugh and smile at something of their own. When asked to retell what they saw or read, a different story comes to light. Our ability to translate into different languages is trained by daily intralingual translation within our native language: we paraphrase by retelling and “understanding” another narrator. W. Hanks (W. Hanks, 2014) argues that intracultural translation plays a constitutive role in the social life of any human group. We are trying to display someone other's world using the mirror of our worldview. It is natural that when there are similar analogues in their native culture, students understand the material better.

Cross-Lingual Translation

What happens in the process of cross-cultural translation? William Hanks (W.Hanks, 2014) calls the process of cross-cultural or cross-linguistic translation a metalinguistic process that occurs in the space of asymmetric differences and produces changes in one or both languages. The primary picture of the native language world is superimposed by the secondary world's image of the studied language. The second world image commences by

studying foreign language and culture, and it is not the image reflected by the language, but the image created by the language. That is why studying a foreign language requires a certain bipolarity of a student. Interaction of primary and secondary images of the world is a complex psychological process requiring certain refusing from habitual self-identification and adjustment to the foreign vision of the world.

The necessity of rebuilding usual way of thinking, reshaping your familiar picture of the world by a weird, unusual example, is one of the most difficulties of comprehending and mastering a foreign language. Under the influence of the secondary world image happens reformatting of an individual. A person speaking several languages passes from one language to another changing the way and the direction of his/her thought.

One of the difficulties in teaching or understanding a foreign language is that every word in every language has its own belonging only to that lingua circle or a reserve of compatibility with other words. This compatibility is unique for each language, and it is not universal by any means. Another difficulty consists in a conflict between different cultural concepts in various languages about the items or reality phenomena which are denoted with "equivalent" words in those languages' words can be translated easily but carry different connotations.

Critics of E. Sapir's theory of relativity sometimes argue that it is impossible to learn and even understand a foreign language. They are only partly right, bearing in mind the fact that cross-lingual translation often leaves aside the unique structures and meanings of the language, aligning itself with the universal grammatical-semantic pattern.

Identity in a Multicultural Society

E.Erikson (E.Erikson, Identity) argued that the crisis of personal identity is inevitable in a multicultural society. We could agree with him only in part. Any crisis that has been overcome is just growing pains and an inevitable condition for the transition to another stage of development.

The statement of the great German poet and scientist I.W. Goethe that, not knowing a foreign language, a person is not able to understand his own proves as the right one through the centuries. Having learned another language, moving to another world, another space, we get the gift of looking at our native world from the outside, from the stage. Therefore, it is hardly possible to talk about the loss of individuality or identity in a multicultural space.

The American concept of "melting pot" does not mean the loss of identity, but the enrichment of each member of a multicultural society is due to the identity of fellow citizens. It is interesting how, over the generations, different ethnic groups retain their culture, language and way of life and form inter-ethnic subcultures with their intermediate sub-languages (Spanglish, Germlish etc.), art and cuisine (TexMex, Creole). At least a third or even half of our students are multilingual and belong to different ethnic communities.

Multilingualism or Bilingualism

Professor Greg Urban of the University of Pennsylvania states, “we are a plurilingual nation”. (Urban, Metaculture; 2001) Multilingualism (multilingualism), which many continue to call bilingualism, is a ubiquitous phenomenon, and most of the world's population, according to the UN, is bi- or multilingual. I think it is appropriate to call the sublanguage of any bilinguals according to the same principle as Spanglish, just adding +lish to the language of origin.

The bilingualism of our students can be divided into three types:

1) Subordinative bilingualism - the second language is perceived through the prism of the native, the so-called "tracing" of consciousness and reflection of reality. All concepts correspond literally with the lexemes of the native language. This type of bilingualism is mainly characteristic of first-wave immigrants, entry-level students.

2) Pure or coordinative bilingualism implies complete equality and autonomy of the two languages, each has its own set of concepts, the grammatical categories of the two languages are independent. This type of bilingualism is rare, because the process of some kind of diffusion and interpenetration of languages/worlds is natural and inevitable.

3) Mixed bilingualism implies a single mechanism for the analysis and synthesis of speech, coexisting languages that differ only at the surface level. This type of bilingualism is typical for students who grew up in families belonging to micro ethnic groups. For example, someone who grew up in an Armenian family can understand the language and use it at a ‘home’, on the everyday level, recognizing some elements of Armenian culture if it was taught to him by representatives of the older generation. That is, the language and culture of the family and the language of society coexist simultaneously, in the case of my students, English.

Cross-Lingual or Cross-Cultural Translation and the Newspeak.

Also, when bilinguals communicate in their native language, a cross-lingual translation is used. Cross-lingual translation, as noted by Hunt (Hunt, 2014), Peirce (Ch. Peirce, 1940) and Jacobson (Jacobson, 2004), creates new meanings, new ways of assessing speech, new use of old images (Hunt, 2014). Germlish (German+English), Spanglish (Spanish+English), Armlish (Armenian + English) are also characterized by newspeak, when the morphological devices of one language and the some of another are mixed to form new words. Or just the concepts of the new society are woven into the fabric of the native or 'family' language, often tracing the control of the verb.

Also, when translating from native to second and vice versa, a new language is created, enriched with new

signs, images, and memes of the area where a new variation of the native language (newspeak) is born in one, separate micro-ethnos. The introduction of slang and dialect words should also be considered in order to understand the process of the emergence of Newspeak. That is, we are no longer dealing with a binary, but at least a three-component relationship between native, English, and a neologized variation of the native language. All these processes are immensely interesting for a scientist-researcher of the formation of micro languages and newspeaks, but still without leading to a common denominator, without teaching students the norms of the foreign literary language, new generations of bilinguals living abroad may gradually lose touch with the very core of the original culture.

I would never have thought that folk tales could be alike each other and monotonous. It turns out they can! When translated into English, a lot of ethnic folk tales have lost all their original beauty. All originality, all unique dialect disappeared, leaving the dull frame of a simple monotonous plot. Students who took only one class of folklore in English were not lucky enough to fully understand and feel the beauty of ethnic folk art, because this course was not given in conjunction with the language and history. Languages should be studied “in inseparable unity with the world and culture of the peoples who speak these languages,” “Each foreign language lesson is a crossroad of cultures, it is a practice of intercultural communication, because every foreign word reflects a foreign world and a foreign culture, behind every word there is a national consciousness ... idea of the world.” (S.Ter-Minasova, 2000). She also believes that “native culture is both a shield that protects the identity of the people and a blank fence that fences off from other cultures.” (S.Ter-Minasova, 2000). So how do you get over that fence?

Linguacultural Approach as a Solution

How to create a true second/parallel picture of the world for students studying new culture and new language in a multicultural and often multilingual space? Of course, using a comprehensive linguistic and cultural approach. And this combined approach is offered by a relatively new discipline, called linguaculturology, or cultural linguistics. The new synergetic science commenced at the end of the 20th century on the edge of anthropology, cognitive linguistics, ethnography, and ethnosemantics.

The linguaculturological approach to the study of foreign culture, history, and literature in conjunction with the study of grammar provides an opportunity to present a full range of knowledge for students who wish to plunge headlong.

V.V. Vorobyov emphasizes that “today it can already be argued that linguoculturology is a new philological discipline that studies a set of cultural values selected and organized in a certain way, explores the living communicative processes of generating and perceiving speech, the experience of a linguistic personality and national mentality, gives a systematic description of the language picture of the world and ensures the fulfillment of educational, upbringing and intellectual tasks of learning” (Vorobyov, 1997).

Linguaculturology as a Science

Indeed, linguaculturology is a complex scientific discipline of a synthesizing type that studies the relationship and interaction of culture and language in its functioning and reflects this process as an integral structure of units in the oneness of their linguistic and extra linguistic or cultural content using system methods and with the focus on modern priorities and cultural institutions (system of norms and universal values). In our opinion, linguaculturology is the new research paradigm for the movement of scientific and cultural thought about language and culture. It does not only expand the scope of a research idea, but it allows a deeper and more comprehensive approach in its possibilities and reserves. It is far from easy to implement the principles of a systematic approach in linguaculturology.

It seems that it is advisable to carry out a holistic and systematic description of the object under consideration, using the term U. Eco, within the framework of the semiotic field as a research model (U. Eco, 1972). Then culture can be represented functionally in the form of special communication 'Kultur als Kommunikation' which is explained through the corresponding metalanguages and constructed by means of their units. "Semiotics explores all cultural processes as processes of communication" (U. Eco, 1972). This aspect requires special attention, especially when it comes to the analysis of extra linguistic content, for example, culture in our study: this is the relation: sign-unit-object. The German logician and semiotician G. Klaus singled out an extremely important for us aspect of semiotics: "linguistic sign however has not only the function of designation, it denotes (names) something.

Semiosis

Linguacultural units (signs and their meanings) are given to us in the process of their functioning, in semiosis, in which founders of semiotics C. Peirce, C. Morris and others, based on views of their predecessors, identified three components: 1) sign (sign), 2) designatum, 3) interpretant and, in addition, 4) an interpreter (Morris, 1938).

That is: 1) a sign means, for example, a sound or a written word, 2) a class of objects (in the case when the object exists as a real object, it is a denotation), 3) a meaning, a content of the sign, and 4) a subject.

In modern semiotics, three levels of study of sign systems are usually distinguished and, accordingly, three of its aspects: 1) syntactics, which studies the relationship between signs and ways of using them, 2) semantics, which studies the content side of signs, their meaning, and 3) pragmatics, the subject of which is the consideration of the relationship between sign systems and those who perceives, interprets and uses the messages they contain.

However, this traditional scheme leaves aside one aspect that is implicitly present in semantics, but requiring special attention, especially when it comes to analysis outside of linguistic content, for example, culture, as in

our study: this is the relationship "sign (unit) - object".

Sigmatics

The German philosopher, logician, and semiotician G. Klaus singled out one more aspect of semiotics, and the fourth one that is extremely important for us: "The linguistic sign, however, has not only the function of meaning, but also the function of something.

For example, the expression "fixed star" denotes the class of suns. This notation can be expressed symbolically by the relation $R_3(Z, O)$ or vice versa by the relation $R_3(O, Z)$, where Z is a linguistic sign, and O is an object (individual, class objects, the relationship between them (1) <...> Figuratively speaking, signs - these are the "labels" of objects <...> Relations $R_3(Z, O)$ and $R_3(O, Z)$ are characterized as "sigmatic" ones, where: 1) R_3 - symbol of sigmatic relation [V.V.], R_2 - semantic, R_1 - syntactic. R_3 characterizes the sigmatic relation. The discipline that studies these relationships is called sigmatics." (Klaus, 1967, p.15-16). Thus, we can talk about four aspects of the model of semiotic description of objects:

Figuratively speaking signs are "labels" of objects. Thus, we can talk about a four-aspect model of semiotic describing of objects:

sign- sign- syntactics

sign- meaning- semantics

sign- object- sigmatics

sign- human- pragmatics

And the fruitfulness of this approach is explained by the fact that all components of semiosis are organically connected. The allocation of sigmatics is extremely important for the study of linguacultural problems since it is a way out into the subject-conceptual, extra linguistic world. "Language semantics are limited due to the generalizing nature of the realema which is the invariant of realities, that unchanging and the central, that is characteristic of all objects of this class" (Tolstoy, 1968). Where the actual linguistic content of the word or unit is limited only by pointing to the realema, then the linguacultural logical definition is precisely aimed at revealing the class of designated objects in all their cultural specifics.

Method of Studying Lingua Cultural Objects

The systematic method of studying linguacultural objects in the unity of semantics, sigmatics, syntagmatics, syntactics and pragmatics makes it possible to obtain a holistic view of them as units in which proper linguistic and extralinguistic content are dialectically connected. The semantic aspect of the semiotic research model reflects the linguistic content of the unit, the sigmatic - its reference, the syntactic aspect reflects the fixation of the unit in the system and the paradigmatic reflects its influence on a person.

The general ratio of factors that determine the linguaculturological meaning is a modification of the scheme of semantic units:

meaning-----concept	area of
	material and spiritual
sign-----unit	culture

The general symmetric model of interpretation of linguaculturological objects should be concretized when considering concepts “linguacultureme” and “linguaculturological” field.

Linguacultureme

The unit of interaction of language and culture is the concept. Concepts are reflected in language only partially; so, the task of the linguist is to explore that part of the concept, which is verbalized in language, while considering language as a medium of representation of meanings. Concept is the meaning embodied in the word by the subject of this word based on the existing in-culture ideas about the ways of implementation of that sense.

Linguacultureme is a complex inter level unit, or a unity of linguistic and extralinguistic content. This unit is deeper in its meaning than a word. The sign system of linguaculturemes should reveal the system of real knowledge about culture, presented in the form of a model in which the actual linguistic “picture of the world” deepens to the linguo-culturological “picture of the world” as a competence.

The signs are consistent with each other due to the dialectical connection of language and thinking as a reflection of the world, linguistic and linguaculturological.

Linguacultureme can be seen as a special micro frame - a block of knowledge about culture, expressed by the corresponding language form and presented at the language level. "Minimal content" - a sign - a lexical meaning, and the system-functional aspect of the field - as a structure of such micro frames.

Cognitive structures thus form the basis of not only knowledge, but also meanings. The modeling of such processes helps to reveal the entire system of linguistic cultures as micro frames in each field. A cognitive model, considered as a deep level of a micro frame, is the result of the linguo-creative activity of a given linguistic society, reflecting the vision of the designated “object” of material or spiritual culture in the corresponding system.

Thus, we should seek to provide our students with linguacultural competence as a system of knowledge about culture, embodied in a certain national language.

Lingua Culturological Dictionaries

Linguists in various countries work on creating linguaculturological dictionaries. It is quite a complex task as they need to define linguacultures within one “national” language field, which is difficult in our age of multiculturalism. Regarding the linguoculturological dictionary, the characterological approach is as follows: the first step is to define the cultural type in the most general terms, which is a problem in itself. In a ‘typical’, i.e. characterizing the culture under study in the area of mechanisms operating in it, then it is necessary to single out significant cultural areas specific to it. The 'search' of the lingua cultures that make up the dictionary, therefore, will be carried out by taking into account cultural meanings on the basis of their own 'internal' characteristics of lingua cultures. The list of linguistic cultures in the dictionary obtained in this way, even if the list is open, can give the characterology of the culture of this type from the side of vocabulary. The discovery of several groups of linguoculturemes which differ in their nature and basic properties, is also possible, and this is also the characterology of culture.

This is a way to define the linguistic cultures of the dictionary as such, and, on the other hand, the very procedure of searching for linguistic cultures, as well as identifying the principles of formation and essential features of the dictionary, are the characterology of the studied linguistic culture. This type of thesaurus should help with establishing linguaculturological competencies of students studying foreign languages, and give them a holistic view of the new language world.

Conclusion

Meanwhile, creating harmonious strategies for education in a multicultural diverse classroom is a process in progress. Linguaculturally aligned teaching of foreign languages and cultures should involve different disciplines, reflecting different sides of relationship between language and culture: history, philosophy, literature of the studied languages among with ethnolinguistics and cultural linguistics. The role of each of these disciplines in education requires a separate, detailed consideration, and provides scientists and pedagogues with a lot of interesting work in the future.

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