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Dynamics of Language Communication in Modern University = Dynamika komunikacji językowej a współczesny uniwersytet

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DYNAMICS OF LANGUAGE COMMUNICATION IN MODERN UNIVERSITY

Dynamika komunikacji językowej a współczesny uniwersytet

Słowa kluczowe: komunikacja językowa, wielodyskursywność, „moc języka" w kulturze, globalizacja, kultura komunikacji.

Key words: linguistic communication, poly discourse, "force of language" in the culture, globalization, culture of communication.

Streszczenie

W artykule przedstawiono analizę wpływu globalnych i lokalnych tendencji społeczno-kulturalnych, związanych z tworzeniem wielokulturowej przestrzeni, na stan praktyk językowych w środowisku kształceniowym współczesnego uniwersytetu.

Abstract

The article analyses the influence of global and local sociocultural trends, associated with formation of multicultural space, on the state of linguistic practices in educational environment of modern university.

In past XX century the scale and intensity of social processes, their mutual penetration have increased so dramatically that it almost excluded the possibility of isolation and closure of any human community, group and individual. Social ties are becoming inherently universal and mandatory, increasing their intensity and highlighting a new role of language and language communication in society's life.

At the same time the breadth of communication possibilites of a greater or lesser extent goes along with the loss of man's ability and willingness to comprehend texts of deep content, shallow-leveled mass communication.

It would be a mistake to find causes of these realities in properties of language and language communication. However, much still depends on capabilities

of understanding the basic properties of language and language communication. Therefore, philosophical analysis of language, language communication and its efficiency is still actual today.

Analysis of the concept of language communication as a main medium and source of all social practices requires some reference to scientific discourses of various levels and directions, an integrated and multi-disciplinary approach. The study of language communication problem includes several areas of scientific and philosophical analysis:

1) basic philosophical and theoretical approaches to language (from F. von Humboldt, F. de Saussure – to modern theories in the context of metatheoretical paradigm shaped by the "linguistic" turn);

2) studies of the phenomenon of social communications and role of linguistic communication in social reality (T. Parsons, E. Giddens, M. Castells, U. Beck, Jh. Webster, I. Wallerstein, N. Elias and others);

3) the study of political and socio-linguistic models of language processes in modern world in the context of language policy theory (D. Cameron, L. Dominelli, S. de Wenden, K. Wilkinson, L. Greenfield, P. Gubbins, F. and J. Lisandro, D. Crystal and others).

Thus, the study of language problems has already had a lot of valuable scientific results. However, there is a lack of studies focused on dynamics of language communication practices in terms of educational processes of modern university.

In the history of communication one can distinguish the following types: mimic and gesture, oral, written and phases of information exchange relevant to them – preverbal, verbal, written, book, electric, electronic, virtual.

Formation and operation of these types of communication and information exchange phases are subject to some legitimate trends. They are:
• continuity in the development: preceding types of communication prepare the basis for emergence of new ones;
• coming communication tools include some elements of previous ones and co-exist along with them;
• evolution of means of communication is on the way from natural to artificial means of communication, from relatively simple technical means to more sophisticated and versatile ones.

Basis of communication is always a language culture, which can be represented as a socially conditioned process of transmission and reception of information in interpersonal, intercultural and mass communication via a variety of verbal and nonverbal means of communication. A distinctive feature of language communication in comparison with other codes or communication systems is its flexibility and versatility. Language communication creates an opportunity for immediate feedback, turning one-way communication into a dialogue.

Full realization of this feature of language communication is enabled in the first place by institutes of pedagogy and education. At all times it is the Word of the lecturer, his ability to represent an academic course in a logical and accessible manner, on the one hand, and his art of speaking, on the other hand, lay the foundations for mastering language skills by a student.

Education occupies the place of special importance in forming new principles of language communication culture in the modern society. One might wonder whether the mass character of education could provide an adequate communicative orientation of individuals, groups and, therefore, their effective interaction.

In this connection, it is necessary to refer to the conclusion drawn by Margaret Mead studying for decades the lifestyle practiced by very different societies: "The social structure of a society and how the process of education is structured – how knowledge is passed on from mother to daughter, from father to son, from mother's brother to sister's son, from the shaman to the new convert, from renowned experts to beginners – to a much greater extent than the actual content of ransmitted knowledge determines the way in which people learn to think, and the way in which results of education are perceived and used, the total amount of individual skills and knowledge..."[1]. On the basis of correlation of culture with the training character (education) Mead identifies three types of cultures: post-figurative, co-figurative, and pre-figurative culture[2].

In post-figurative culture, children primarily learn from their forebears. In cofigurative culture, both children and adults learn from their peers. In pre-figurative culture, adults also learn from their children because of accelerating rate of social changes that have taken place within the lifetime of one generation. To bridge generational gaps, Margaret Mead suggests that "we must, in fact, teach ourselves how to alter adult behavior so that we can give up post-figurative upbringing, with its tolerated co-figurative components, and discover pre-figurative ways of teaching and learning that will keep the future open"[3]. In a new millennium, boundaries among post-figurative, co-figurative, and pre-figurative cultures have become fluid and unsettling. While formal education continues to facilitate transmission of the past generation's cultural values, ongoing globalization inadvertently leads us to question our post-figurative upbringing and accept co-figurative culture formation.

An illustration to the words of Margaret Mead could be the situation with classical university in modern society. Being the project of Modernity the classical university has always been regarded as a guardian of national culture. The

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[1] M. Mead, *Continuities in Cultural Evolution*, Yale University Press, New Haven – London 1964, p. 79.

[2] M. Mead, *Culture and Commitment. A Study of the Generation Gap*, Natural History Press/Doubleday and Co., New York 1970, p. 14–15.

[3] Ibidem, p. 361.

classical univeristy has signed a pact with the government, established an allian-
ce of knowledge and power, implying the creation of values nedeed for social
integration of the nation-state, in the form of which a "civilized" society could
exclusively exist.

Nowadays in European and North American educational space four univer-
sity models can be distinguished:

1. Humboldt "research university", where scientific and educational activi-
ties were seen as interacting components from the very beginning of university
course; students must acquire experience in dealing with the most advanced
science, in the continuous search of new scientific knowledge so that at one time
to become pioneers in their respective professional fields[4].

2. British residential model ("Oxbridge model"), based on close informal
communication of students and lecturers. This kind of communication is consi-
dered to be of the same importance for development of youth as the attendance
of lectures and seminars.

3. French model of "large schools", which became a symbol of state-run me-
ritocratic society, in which higly professional staff are regarded to be the super-
elite. These academic establishments which do not involve research activity, are
higly selective in intellectual and social dimensions.

4. Chicago model represents the general curriculum with a strong humanita-
rian orientation. This model was designed to "acquaint the student with the views
of leading scholars in the humanities, natural and social sciences, to develop stu-
dent's ability and needs in his further self-education, independence and critical
thinking"[5].

Thus, Germany, Britain, France and the United States add the national co-
lors to the university tradition, presenting its ideal state.

Nowadays, however, under the conditions of globalization the value of na-
tion-state radically decreases, and the university is no longer a means of natio-
nal and cultural identity. In other words, along with eradication of the project of
Modernity with its key model of social organization in the form of nation-state
with its claim to approve cultural patterns and form cultural hierarchies, one co-
uld point out to dissolution of classical university as a central (monopoly) struc-
ture of educational system.

The diversification of universities and growth of private universities are the
main trends of recent years. As a result, four models mentioned above – are just
a part of what we now take into account, analyzing the models of modern Ger-
man, British, French and American universities. For example, among variants of

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[4] T. Husen, *The Role of the University: A Global Perspective*, UNESCO, Paris 1994, p. 136.
[5] G. Karr'e, *Kul'turnye modeli universiteta* [*Cultural Models of a University*], "Alma Ma-
ter" 1996, no. 3, pp. 14–18 (in Russian).

the university, brought to life in the last decades the pragmatic model of university in developing countries, the revolutionary counter-culture model as well as a model of politicized university could be found.

Growing number of private universities shows that today the University is increasingly perceived as a commercial institution with exclusively pragmatic targets. In pragmatic university the function connected with the search of truth fades giving a way to the service, trade, and business functions. The pragmatic model of a public, private or mixed type offers training programs in accordance with the needs of society.

The sample of pragmatic university is a commercial university. Commercial universities are private profit-oriented universities, that meet the needs of wealthy families who want to provide their children with diplomas. The spirit of these universities looks like usual spirit of entrepreneurship. In their quest for profit, these universities are often able to compete with each other. As the quota of private universities in recent decades has grown in conjunction with dominant commercial orientation, it could be an indicator of active dissemination of entrepreneurial spirit in educational sphere. Reorientation of the university for the profit but not for the truth is not its choice but a forced measure taken in the situation of reduction of the volume of state financial support. In fact, European governments have forced the university to lead the self-financing.

In addition to that, under pressure of globalization the University can not be understood as a solely utilitarian one (a kind of place where students obtain a profession under the guidance of professors). The pure professional training in the radically changing world is hopeless. The University starts performing a political, an administrative and above all – an identification role, acting as a kind of community that forms the appropriate social environment and ways of democratic participation in knowledge society.

The concepts of "subjective identity", "individual identity", and "cultural identity" are the core of modern educational establishment. The idea of internal distance between the subject and subject in poly discourse lays the foundation for multiple students' interactions with different disciplines carrying the logic of their discourses. It enables one to say about "poly discourse" content of the educational program of modern university.

The formation of poly discourse space in educational process largely depends on the type of knowledge, the education it is built on. The knowledge of current stage of culture, science and civilization does not involve the work with frozen dozes of information. It means that a student should master methodology of dealing with the information than the information itself: its critical perception, different forms of understanding, interpretation and reinterpretation. In educational process the student should master the discourse logic to give up his position within a discourse, to get into the frame of another.

Traditional dependence of discourse subject on its language (so called "language force") significantly eases off with the appearance of border areas (open borders). Being able to manipulate with these borders (to move them or, conversely, to comply), the subject constructs a qualitatively new linguistic reality, has a new responsibility, a new form of presence in its own language. This situation makes one rethink the problems of subject identity – as the boundaries and rules for their determining, obviously, vary – according to the logic of whole culture.

This variety of tasks of modern university, due to Clark Kerr[6], leads to potential unification of large universities in the future; weakening of formal ties of lecturers with any particular university making possible their free movement from one university town to another; development of new information technologies enabling communication among education centers. The whole country will turn into a huge conglomerate consisting of university centers, so-called "ideo-poleis".

What communication strategies will prevail in the walls of modern university? The monological type of communication (the word of professor / author of the text as a "word in itself", carrying the truth, and having an exclusive privilege and authority, not being questioned and added) occupied the central place in student-lecturer, student-educational text relations within traditional university discourse.

The mentioned above "normative cognitive communication model" is limited to causal-explanatory and prescriptive positions where the role of the lecturer is an active monologue and the role of the student is passive perception. These positions are reflected in so-called cognitive-theoretical statements of proposals which are broadcast directly from the lecturer to a student in the form of "true judgment". This type of communication is characterized with absolute identification of communicators, or their full or partial reduction.

Along with the "normative cognitive (or representative)" communication strategy one could find the "project" strategy. The peculiarity of the second communication strategy is acceptance of the view that nobody has a completed, predetermined set of conceptual representations and language means, but they are formed in the process of educational communication. An important condition of realizing this communication strategy is determination of the common discourse space – an object-symbolic field, in the context of which the communicative actions are possible. This area is shaped by participants of educational communication on the basis of academic original texts, offered by the lecturer. In the process of study and interpreting these texts the semantic field of academic discourse gradually appears, with respect to which the further self-determination of subjects of educational communication is possible. The moment of self-determination marks the choice of communicators implying their ability to be in methapo-

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[6] C. Kerr, *The Uses of the University*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge 1982, v. IX, p. 24.

sition in the structure of three types of relationships: to the text, to others, to yourself. This model is interactive educational communication.

The communicative means used in university education are considered to be the key factor of establishing the project (dialogical) communication strategy, involving polyphony and equality of all academic participants.

Forseeing the significance of communicative means in educational deveolopment, at the end of the 19th century John Henry Newman pointed out to the results of usage of the printing press: a boundless sea of periodicals, treatises, pamphlets, papers and a series of entertaining literature. He noted that the printing era was the most conducive for spreading educational and information means responsible for man's intellectual growth[7].

Modern language communication uses radically new information and telecommunication technologies. Revolutions in communication processes coincide with the following types of sign exchange: 1) "face-to-face" exchange of oral speech; 2) written communications, indirect printing; 3) exchange carried out by means of electronics.

New media include a wide range of Internet and mobile apps: social networking, Internet blogs, microblogs, the Internet, TV and radio, photo and video publishing services for data storage, virtual games and others. They do not merely transform the spatial and temporal parameters of social interactions, but practically create a new communication structure. The characteristics of new media are interactivity, openness, development of horizontal non-hierarchical relationships, ignorance of geographical distance.

It is possible to distinguish three stages of transforming the higher education system under pressure of new media. In the first stage the number of information sources is expanding, possibilities of creating educational institutions' sites are emerging. The second stage is characterized by involvement of Web 2.0 technologies, contributing to development of multilateral communication and participation of users in the creation of information. Educational sites are not a showcase, they reflect all the aspects of life of the university. In the third stage the structural changes are clear: new structures and forms appear. There are brand new educational institutions, forms of study, approaches to the grading elements of educational system.

To guarantee the optimal functioning of higher education system and educational institutions in new media conditions one should develop a set of new media structure. The new media structure includes formal and informal media of universities, online resources related to the educational process (digital libraries, scientific journals, online courses, video lectures, information databases, forums, wikis and other services).

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[7] J.H. Newman, *The Idea of a University*, ed. by M.J. Svaglic, Rinehart Press, San Francisco 1960.

Functionally, the new media can help to form academic communities, to create communication platforms on organizational matters, to develop new forms and methods of classes, to arrange an interactive communication in the educational process, to provide external relations with students, employers, business partners. In general, they stimulate communication and thereby contribute into the production of their own senses in social systems. The system of higher education inspects itself with the help of sociological tools (ratings, monitorings, polls and others).

Among disfunctional manifestations of media in education one could find: an information overload, a complexity of the search process, inability to ensure the quality of data huge in its flow, the diverting impact caused by a variety of recreational resources, games, social networking, and the risk of loss and distortion of information due to technical failures.

To summarize, it should be noted that activities of higher education institutions are no longer considered to be full-fledged in the case of their absence in the media space. Non-recognition or underestimation of the role of new media proliferation leads to the growth of disfunctionality of the educational system, negatively affects the communication competence.

The decrease of language communication could be found by means of both students and lecturers. The significant changes are associated with widespread use of units of lowered stylistic constructs – jargons. For example, the speech of today's students includes the neologisms and computer slang. In interpersonal communication students use the slang based on deliberate distortion of words that drastically changes their initial meanings. In addition, students often use symbols and signs instead of words (brackets, full stops, etc.), which hardly can convey true human feelings and emotions.

Jose Ortega y Gasset was the one who made a protest against the decline of the communication culture in the university: "culture – is a system of living ideas belonging to each period. What I call living ideas or the ideas on which we live – he wrote – are those that contain our basic convictions regarding the nature of the world and our fellow human beings, the hierarchy of values for things and actions, which ones are worth of esteem and which ones are less so"[8]. Moreover, he insisted that culture is mostly realized through science. The usage of slang and emoticons instead of the words respective to the situations leads to a lack of faith in the word, the selective use of lexical-semantic system and the thinking schematism. All this leads to negative consequences for the mental development of language users, national history, and cultural traditions.

Newspeak, based on the slang and graphical symbols, describes different functions overlaying upon each other and the birth of new ones which were ne-

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[8] J. Ortega y Gasset, *Man and People*, Norton & Company Inc., New York 1957, p. 94.

ver observed before. The main function is influence as a special case of an informative function, combined with impression and expression as well as a kind of magic or myth-making function. Generally, information provides the recipient with a certain level of knowledge, which in turn, provokes some estimations and views, leads to the fact that postulated facts are perceived as a reflection of the real state of things. As for Newspeak, it creates ritual texts not for information or estimation but for pure participation in the life of society.

The introduction of slang elements leads to "inflating" the text, dissolving the information into cliches and sense-free phrases. This method of communication is publicly dangerous, moreover, it accustoms communicators to "thoughtless speech".

In recent years, the aspiration for study of foreign languages has dramatically increased. For the first time there is an actualized need to master foreign languages. The knowledge of foreign languages may change the individual's lifestyle, influence the choice of life's purpose and its meaning, expand the living space, etc. Fluent knowledge of foreign languages allows to develop both professionally and communicatively.

However, the negative aspect of studying foreign languages is abuse of words of foreign origin – primarily American English. Sharing the same position, Marian Bugajski said: "The compounds as Western cars, Western furniture, Western clothes have become phraseological units [...]. In all these compounds, the adjective »Western« may be substituted for the American [...]. For this reason, American car means the same thing as »very good (the best)« car; American furniture – »very good (the best)«, furniture and so on..."[9]. Thus, it leads to strengthening the complex of provinciality. Preservation of diversity of languages is regarded as a sign of backwardness. Hence there is a situation of force in language communication. The user of language begins to use foreign elements despite the fact of their unclear meaning. As a result, one can point out to the errors at all levels of the language, which, in the end, lead to numerous disruptions in the communication process.

Preserving the current pace of withering away languages of local peoples and local communities, as shown by studies of UNESCO, about 3,000 languages are on the verge of extinction and may cease existing forever. Fewer number of languages are a means of international communication, and as a result they are being phased out of the world community life, despite the fact that the disappearance of even one language is an irreparable loss for world civilization.

Summing up, one can say that owing to fundamental role of knowledge in modern society the University turns into a key social institution. Assertion of one

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[9] M. Bugajski, *Yazyik kommunikatsii* [*Language of Communication*], Humanitarnyiy Tsentr, Kharkiv 2010, p. 454. (in Russian)

or another type of communication in the modern University is not a neutral act, rather a social action, which henceforth can be fixed as the substantive foundation of culture in general. In this regard, one can speak of a communicative strategy, deliberately supported depending on solved problems in the educational process. If the normative (representative) strategy dominated in classical university, then the project strategy came in the first place in the modern university. Being the result of convention among participants of educational processes, this strategy actualizes the language competence of lecturers and students.

The main characteristics of language communication in the modern University are: polysubjectivity (involvement of all subjects of educational acitivity into mastering innovations); innovativeness (use of educational methods and technologies elaborated by modern science); technological effectiveness (use of modern communication technologies). Processes of informatization and computerization cause democratization and liberalization of language communication, which along with positive have some negative effects (expanded use of slang, jargon and other linguistic elements decreasing the level of language communication culture).

Under pressure of globalization one of the basic problem of education in intercultural environment turns to be homogenization of language communication in national, local and regional communities.

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