Language Identification Content in Cross-Cultural Communication

Oleg Yu. Astakhov*, Oksana V. Rtischeva
Kemerovo State Institute of Culture
Kemerovo, Russian Federation

Abstract. The article considers the issues for determining the content features of the language identification mechanisms in cross-cultural communication. Their realizing helps to overcome the miscommunication arising as a result of the difficulty for coordinating the interests of participants in cross-cultural communication, who perceive each other within the emerging stereotypes.

The article considers the ideas of W. von Humboldt and his follower L. Weisgerber, who became the harbingers of a new view on realizing communication within the relations between culture and language. Their interpretation of the language identification of culture influenced establishing anthropocentric ideas on the language as a mechanism for implementing cultural reflection. So W. von Humboldt comes to the conclusion that the language is not just a means of communication, but the basis for developing internal spiritual forces of a person, the implementation of which is provided by the language creation activity; the language creation activity indicates that the language should be considered as a creative process in the culture implementation. Weisgerber L. has a similar understanding of the language, he considers the language ability as a mental activity characterized not only by static assimilation of culture, but also by a dynamic attitude to it.

The logic of W. von Humboldt and L. Weisgerber's arguments allows us to come to a conclusion about the necessity for realizing the language identification in cross-cultural communication within cultural relativism, in which the recognition of differences as natural characteristics of culture is realized. Thus, realizing cross-cultural communication is determined by forming cultural pluralism. So, it determines the significance of specific situations for cross-cultural communication. The openness of these situations establishes the language identification of culture, focused on language creation revealing the content of culture as a dynamic and incomplete formation in its development.

Keywords: language identification, cross-cultural communication, communication, cultural relativism, W. von Humboldt, L. Weisgerber.

Research area: culturology.

* Corresponding author E-mail address: astahov_oleg@mail.ru, ortishheva@mail.ru

Содержание языковой идентификации в процессе межкультурного взаимодействия

О. Ю. Астахов, О. В. Ртищева
Кемеровский государственный институт культуры
Российская Федерация, Кемерово

Аннотация. Статья посвящена рассмотрению вопросов определения содержательных особенностей механизмов языковой идентификации в процессе межкультурного взаимодействия. Их понимание способствует преодолению дискоммуникации, которая возникает в результате сложности согласования интересов участников межкультурной коммуникации, которые воспринимают друг друга сквозь призму складывающихся стереотипов.

В работе рассматриваются идеи В. фон Гумбольдта и его последователя Л. Вайсгербера, которые стали предвестниками нового взгляда на понимание коммуникации сквозь призму отношений языка и культуры. Их толкование языковой идентификации культуры во многом определили формирование антропоцентристских представлений о языке как механизме реализации культурной рефлексии. Так, В. фон Гумбольдт приходит к выводу о том, что язык – это не просто средство общения, а основа развития внутренних духовных сил человека, реализация которых обеспечивается языкотворческой активностью, которая свидетельствует о том, что язык следует рассматривать как созидающий процесс в осуществлении культуры. Близким к такому пониманию языка оказывается Л. Вайсгербер, который рассматривает языковую способность как мыслительную активность, характеризуемую не только статическим усвоением культуры, но и динамическим отношением к ней.

Логика рассуждений В. фон Гумбольдта и Л. Вайсгербера позволяет сделать вывод о необходимости осмысления языковой идентификации межкультурного взаимодействия сквозь призму культурного релятивизма, в котором реализуется признание различий как естественных характеристик культуры. В этом ключе понимание межкультурного взаимодействия определяется формированием культурного плюрализма, определяющего значимость конкретных ситуаций межкультурной коммуникации. Открытость этих ситуаций формирует языковую идентификацию культуры, ориентированную на языкотворчество, открывающее содержание культуры как динамичного и незавершенного в своем развитии образования.

Ключевые слова: языковая идентификация, межкультурное взаимодействие, коммуникация, культурный релятивизм, В. фон Гумбольдт, Л. Вайсгербер.

Научная специальность: 24.00.00 – культурология.

Introduction

Modern ideas on the features of cross-cultural communication are often reduced for considering the content of cultural stereotypes arising as a result of mutual identification, based on the replication of ideas about "our" and "alien" cultures. This division of cultures becomes the main way to identify them, which is based on the principle of contrasting different cultural features. Based on the opposition of "our" and "alien", each culture builds its own ways for communicating with other cultures, focusing on the subject representations dictated by addressing another culture through the prism of self – identification, which provides self-understanding. Therefore, the content of these ideas is largely subjective, which creates great difficulties for cross-cultural communication.

Language identification features
in realizing cultural differences

In many ways, communication participants perceive each other through the prism of themselves. Thereby, it is difficult to understand the meaning of communicative actions that are not characteristic of themselves. The possibility of matching interests is violated, because cultural differences do not allow us to adequately perceive information from each other. All these facts generate miscommunication. Moreover, miscommunication is accompanied by an instinctive sense of danger. Thus, "Etymological dictionary of the Russian language" by M. Fasmer notes the relationship between the meaning of the word *alien* and the Hittite language. *tuzzi* (army), so the etymological understanding of "alien" is associated with aggressive and even militant value judgments (Fasmer, 1987: 582–583). Not awareness of culturally-specific views on the world multiplicity by the participants of cross-cultural communication can create a conflict situation. Therefore, the recognizing and understanding cultural differences become the starting point for determining the causes of communicative inadequacy.

Sadokhin A. P. explains the factors of cultural miscommunication from the position of ethnocentrism: "When contacting other cultures, most people judge other people's cultural values, using the cultural values of their own nation as a model and criterion. This type of value judgment is commonly called ethnocentrism. Ethnocentrism is a psychological attitude to perceive and evaluate "alien" cultures and the behavior of their representatives through the prism of "our" culture. At the same time, ethnocentrism is based on the belief that "our" culture is superior to other "alien" cultures, and in this case it is considered as the only correct one, surpassing all others, thus all other cultures are underestimated. In other words, anything that deviates from the norms, customs, and behaviors of "our" culture is considered and classified as low grade relative to "our" culture. "Our" culture sees itself as the measure of all things. Adherents of this type of worldview do not realize that other nations develop their culture in order to make their own life meaningful and establish order in their environment" (Sadokhin, 2007: 17).

The widespread realizing cross-cultural communication as a relationship between "our" and "alien" cultures should be considered through the prism of establishing identification borders providing, on the one hand, self – determination, achieving identity with oneself, and, on the other hand, going beyond oneself in order to accept the other. Therefore, it is necessary to implement dual processes in cross-cultural communication, aimed at realizing the internal basis of "our" culture and a detached position, a different coordinate system forming a distance in the reflection of conditions and characteristics of "alien" culture. In this regard, there is a necessity to define the borders of the subject bases in identifying the specifics of cross-cultural communication. And considering the language identification

mechanisms setting the way to interpret the nature and lines of communicative interactions is the first step in this direction. That way, defining the role of the language identification in cross-cultural communication provides the understanding of an original cultural unit in the context of its constant formation, corresponding to the person's development in the system of cultural values.

Language identification of multiple cultures in researches of W. von Humboldt

The aspects of scientific issues related to the language identification of culture has developed under the influence of anthropocentric ideas on language as the mechanism of implementing cultural reflection in analytic philosophy of the first half of the XXth century by B. Russell, G. Ferge, L. Wittgenstein, etc. But in the XIXth century these issues were considered by V. von Humboldt, and later they were studied by L. Weisgerber (European neohumboldtianism) based on neo-Kantian doctrine of E. Cassirer, as well as by E. Sapir – B. Whorf (American ethno-linguistics).

In the tractate "On the difference in the structure of human languages and its influence on the spiritual development of humanity", published in 1836, W. von Humboldt actually outlined the direction of work related to defining the identification characteristics of language toward the ways of creating different cultures, while the author considered "human spiritual force" as a link ensuring the regulation of relations between language and culture: "Dividing humanity into nations and tribes and the difference in its languages and dialects are, of course, closely related, but at the same time both directly depend on a third phenomenon of a higher order – actions of the human spiritual force (Erzeugung menschlicher Geisteskraft), always appearing in new and often more perfect forms" (Humboldt, 2000: 46–47).

These arguments of W. von Humboldt about the action of human spiritual force were in many ways a continuation of the ideas of J. G. Herder about the national character and the soul of people, which were defined in the works of G. Vico. Considering the development of language in unity with the human spiritu-

al force, W. von Humboldt associated its creative intentions, providing a variety of cultural forms, expressing the national spirit, which determines its language identification. Therefore, "the stronger the influence of spirit on the language, the more natural and rich the development of the last" (Humboldt, 2000: 47). At the same time, the author explains the development of language by its constant changes through expressing human spiritual power.

Thus, W. von Humboldt comes to the conclusion that the content features of language are not determined by its relations to external phenomena associated with the identification characteristics of its functionality, it is not just a means of communication, but the basis for developing internal spiritual forces of a person, the implementation of which is provided by language creation activity, which indicates that language should not be considered as a dead product (Erzeugtes), but as a creative process (Erzeugung). Thus, it is necessary to abstract from the fact that it functions to identify the subjects and as a means of communication. Therefore, we should pay great attention to its close connection with inner spiritual activity and interaction of these two phenomena (Humboldt, 2000: 69).

The philosopher considers language as a system that is eternally and continuously created. In this regard, M. V. Lebedev proves that the strong point of W. von Humboldt's concept is his adjustment on the absolutizing the variability and mobility of language, based on its creative nature (Lebedev, 2009: 92). In addition, Andzheevskii B. wrote about this activist theory of the relationship between language and culture: "In Humboldt's understanding, language is necessarily active and creative, and, therefore, it is never equal to itself, it changes at every moment. It cannot be seen as a complete product or "inanimate object". It should be considered as a continuous creativity, the eternal work of the spirit" (Andzheevskii, 2015: 20).

That way, the language identification in culture is presented as an incomplete process, which is dictated by the attitude to creative self-implementation. Internal creative potencies in culture provide increasing the horizons of world vision, which is invariably determined

by a human spiritual power. Humboldt W. von focuses on the fact that the culture development is dictated primarily by the content of its internal creative intentions, and the language accordingly expresses this spiritual formation of the human race.

However, these logical conclusions of the author, influenced by educational settings reveal a paradox associated with an ambiguous understanding of the language in culture. Considering the divergence of the individual in society, W. von Humboldt proves the connection between the paradox of human life and the specifics of language identification in a culture that focuses on the attribution of what is recognizable and unrecognizable, familiar and unfamiliar at the same time. Considering the truth as the target for setting communication processes, W. von Humboldt notes that its achievement requires the connection between a subjective perception and a general nature of a person, since the awareness of its limitations requires appealing to the external objective world, which gives a significance of speech activity providing a connection with this world.

Thus, cross-cultural communication is based on the equivalence of attitudes related to recognizing and not recognizing each other, which is caused on the one hand, by expressing individuality, and on the other hand, by the desire to integrate with the surrounding world. W. von Humboldt writes about this human paradox in culture, that vegetative and single existence of the person on Earth, his helplessness pushes him to communicate with their own kind and he requires understanding through language for collective beginnings. Spiritual development, even with extreme concentration and isolation of character, is possible only through language, and language implies an appeal to a person different from us and understanding us. An articulate sound pours from the chest to awaken in another person an echo that would return to us again and be perceived by us. Thus, a person makes the discovery that there are other persons around him and they have the same internal needs as he has. Therefore, they are able to meet the various impulses that excite him. Indeed, the sense of wholeness and the desire for it arise in a the person along with the sense

of individuality and are strengthened in the same degree as the last is sharpened, because each person has human nature, which has only chosen a particular path of development. We do not, of course, have even the remotest sense of any other consciousness than that of the individual. But the desire for wholeness and the seed of unquenchable impulses, embedded in us by the concept of our humanity, do not allow us to weaken the belief that a separate individual is only a phenomenon of spiritual essence in a limited existence (Humboldt, 2000: 64).

Here, the author proves understanding of the whole and the particular by a person, which generates an understanding of language focused on identifying the surrounding world through the synthesis of universal and individual characteristics. That is, the basis for understanding the world becomes the search for oneself in it through awareness of one's involvement in the world and detachment.

Defining the specifics of language communication through the identification of human relations to the world was carried out in the unfinished linguistic and philosophical study of W. von Humboldt "On the dual number". The author notes that the dualism of expressing human communication with the world acts as the development of language creation that implements the deep ambivalence of spirit organization: "But in the invisible spirit organization, in the laws of thought, in the classification of categories the notion of duality finds even more profound and original roots: in the thesis and the antithesis, in position and removal, in being and nothingness, in "I" and the world" (Humboldt, 1985, p 398). Thus, any form of the language identification can be reduced to expressing duality, which is based on the nature of human perception of the world through the relationship between "our" and "alien", but at the same time this disconnection generates the desire of a person to establish spiritual unity: "the most decisive circumstance for the language is that duality occupies a more important place than anywhere else. Any speech is based on the alternation of statements, during which, even with several participants, the speaker always opposes the companions as a unity. A person speaks, even in his mind, only to another, or to himself as to another, and thus outlines the

circle of his spiritual kinship, separating those who speak as he does from those who speak otherwise. This feature, dividing all people into two classes – "our" and "alien"-is the basis of any initial social connection" (Humboldt, 1985: 399).

Thus, the situation of language discrepancy determines the understanding of "our" and "alien" cultures, which in their opposition represent a disconnected whole that tends to close again. In this case, the language identification of culture is based on the possibility of implementing a situation "between", so in a situation of dialogue having a lot of participants of communication. In these judgments, W. von Humboldt actually foresees the problem of the correlation of ethnocentrism and ethnorelativism in cultural interaction, which provides further research of understanding the need to change communication paradigms in explaining the mechanisms of cross-cultural communication.

Subject basis of the language identification of cultures in L. Weisgerber's study

Understanding of the idio-ethnicity of the language as a cultural phenomenon was developed in neohumboldtianism, in particular, we find significant statements in the works of L. Weisgerber. Being as a successor of the ideas of W. von Humboldt, the German researcher develops the idea of the variability and mobility of the language in culture. That way, the scientific evolution of the views of L. Weisgerber can be considered as a movement from the ideas of universalism to a subjective understanding of the language in culture, which led him for realizing the significance of a mobile point of view on the world, being implemented in the nature of mental activity, rather than its stable statement.

The author's ideas that the impact of the language on a person is not carried out within external universal systems, but within the process of thinking itself, are already implemented in a program monograph published in 1929: "Thus, using the language tools can also occur in the form of thinking in language forms, which leads to an important conclusion that the language possibilities influences thinking" (Weisgerber, 2004: 47). Understanding the in-

tegration between language and mental activity leads L. Weisgerber to create the concept of "language picture of the world", expressing the identification characteristics of a culture. Following W. von Humboldt, the researcher believes that the connection between a person and reality is mediated by mental activity, which is implemented in language practices that fix the specifics of language thinking. In this regard, L. Weisgerber considers language thinking as a living language creation organism: "Talking about the ability of a person to master a specific language, the term human language organism (Sprachorganismus) is used. Thus, there are two circumstances hidden under the term language: speaking (or, more generally, using the language tools) and individual language proficiency, the last forming the basis of the first" (Weisgerber, 2004: 48).

The author considers the language as a single intentional whole that includes the perceived side and meaning, which is realized in the process of thinking, the content of which reveals the conceptual meanings of the phenomena under consideration. These processes are not obvious and open for L. Weisgerber, but they form the language basis, without which it is impossible to build various communications. The conceptual language basis is compared by the researcher with realizing the name of the object: "For primitive thinking to know the name meant to have power over the object, so the name should be kept secret, etc.; thus, here the understanding that the knowledge of the name gives the knower spiritual power, conceptual possession of the objects, is refracted into the idea of magical influence" (Weisgerber, 2004: 61). This interpretation of the name of the subject generates an understanding of the conceptual content of the language at the cultural level, which is defined by the author as "the cultural property of the community". Thus, a sensually perceived statement is only a language form that indicates the need to move to a higher level of realizing reality associated with the discovery of cultural content. No one speaks a language because of their own language personality; on the contrary, this language proficiency grows on the basis of belonging to a language community, which forms

the character of language identification in a culture. Therefore, the language for individuals becomes the basis for the production of similar ways of thinking, similar ways of presenting the results of knowledge.

According to the concept of W. von Humboldt, the philosopher emphasizes that a person masters already existing conceptual meanings. He writes that a person is freed from the hassle and effort associated with independent processing of experience, ordering it and classifying it; he forms concepts that his native language prescribes, and can't do it as an isolated person. So, even the simplest language represents a much higher stage of development than a person could achieve in a short period of his life (Weisgerber, 2004: 147). This means that the specificity of each language is determined by the dominant ways of forming concepts that dictate the nature of the language intent consciousness. The external form of the language only fixes the ways of "the spirit work".

However, in concrete practices of the language identification of culture, we are faced with an infinite combination of components of the already established internal form, which is expressed in the conceptual content. And in this case, the language demonstrates the process of continuous spiritual transformation; and establishing connections between impulses from the "outside world" and the intervention of the human spirit. Considering the phenomenon, L. Weisgerber is close to understand the language relativity that occurs due to the settings on the constant changes in human development. As author thinks, language ability is a force, proportional to the sensory and spiritual forces of a person. This means that the phenomena of the world are perceived by the senses and processed into specific spiritual transformations, passing into the area of human consciousness. Thereby, language assimilation of the world is implemented at the level of a language community as part of humanity and on the individual level, as individual member of a language community. As L. Weisgerber proves, the deployment of the language ability in the assimilation of the world is subordinated by the language law of humanity including three laws, such as the law of being conditioned by the language,

the law of the native language, and the law of a language community.

Weisgerber L. proves that ethnorelativism appears in the issues of cross-cultural communication, where the problem of forming a community providing a transfer of internal content of the language is very important. Everyone who really knows and speaks a foreign language is required to think in accordance with this language. And translation from one language to another turns into a difficult craft. And the problem is not in the differences of sounds. The main aspect is a substantial aspect. It is very difficult to translate the way of thinking of one language into another without replacing the translation with a fake. Finally, it is worth paying attention to the almost insurmountable barriers that exist between speakers of different languages and that cannot be explained by purely external circumstances, so they have much deeper roots (Weisgerber, 2004: 105). Considering language as a cultural heritage, L. Weisgerber evaluates its understanding as the development of the internal content of culture. If the participants of communication are focused on developing this cultural heritage, then they gradually come to a homogeneous knowledge using similar forms, and thus, to an agreement in thinking, which is expressed in the possibility of mutual understanding. From this point of view, it becomes obvious that the subject position in the language identification must be coordinated with the essential understanding of culture.

However, coordinating the subject activity with the community should be implemented in two ways, taking into account static and dynamic characteristics of language: on the one hand, the language should be considered through the assessment of its sustainable formation, therefore L. Weisgerber writes about a native language. Only through native language realizing internal content is possible. On the other hand, considering language as an organismic formation capable for development and constant renewal is very significant. In turn, static consideration of the language is carried out from two sides: external (sound) and content (conceptual). Dynamic consideration of the language also has two sides: on the one

hand, we consider the role of the language in the process of cognition and in the process of the language identification of all phenomena and objects of reality. On the other hand, we consider the influence of language on human actions and on the life of the language group as a whole. Thus, L. Weisgerber follows the ideas of W. von Humboldt, proves that language is not a fact (ergon), but an activity (energia).

In this regard, L. P. Lobanova notes: "According to L. Weisgerber, the language as an ergon contains a static picture of the world (Weltansicht), represented by "the language contents" (sprachliche Inhalte), and the language as an energeia is a dynamic picture of the world (Weltbild), represented by "the language techniques" (sprachliche Zugriffe) of world development" (Lobanova, 2013). In other words, to consider the language as an ergon means to define its characteristics as an isolated entity that is turned towards it, and to see its energeia means to discover in it effective possibilities for further development oriented towards the discovery of new content. The ergon-energeia opposition does not mean a formal division into static written speech and dynamic spoken speech, but rather a larger-scale opposition related to the existential characteristics of the language in its statics and dynamics.

Thus, L. Weisgerber, following W. von Humboldt, actualizes the permanence value for language development in culture, which is provided by the active position of a person, implementing the language creation in his mental activity, aimed at understanding the world and identifying it in culture. Weisgerber L. makes an important discovery on the principles of the language identification in culture. They provide understanding through differentiation of self-appeal and appeal to the outside world; establishing borders necessary for achieving identity with oneself within the language community and finding oneself through appeals to another.

Conclusion

The logic of reasoning of W. von Humboldt and his follower L. Weisgerber reflects the need to understand the language identification in cross-cultural communication through cultural relativism. The basis for such assumptions is the statement that culture can be understood through a specific situation, there is no single "standard of correctness". Cultural relativism begins with recognizing cultural differences as a natural phenomenon of the real world. So this fact can provide forming a personality open for implementing adequate cultural communication and interaction.

Understanding the language identification in cross-cultural communication provides establishing cultural pluralism, the meaning of which is not in recognizing the differences of cultures, but in a more adequate understanding of specific situations in cross-cultural communication. Pluralism is characterized by realizing cultural differences as part of one's own identity. Understanding another culture in an adequate communication requires its acceptance. It is provided by an empathic attitude related to the "alien" through oneself. And the shortest way to implement this action is to appeal to the stereotypes arising when you realize your own culture as obvious and even superior to all others in its realism. However, both W. von Humboldt and his followers notes the need to identify culture through constant searching and finding internal meanings; they are realized in every act of the language creation, focused on the identification of culture through its implementation as a dynamic and incomplete formation.

References

Andzheevskii, B. Immanuil Kant i voprosy kommunikativnogo konstruktivizma [Immanuel Kant and the issues of communication constructivism]. In: *Kantovskij sbornik* [*Kantian journal*], 2015, 1, 17–25.

Weisgerber, L. *Rodnoj yazyk i formirovanie duha* [*A native language and forming the spirit*]. Moscow: Editorial URSS, 2004, 32 p.

Humboldt, W. von *YAzyk i filosofiya kul'tury* [*Language and philosophy of culture*]. Moscow: Progress, 1985, 448 p.

Humboldt, W. von *Izbrannye trudy po yazykoznaniyu* [*Selected works on linguistics*]. Moscow: Progress, 2000, 400 p.

Lebedev, M. V. Dinamicheskij podhod k analizu sootnosheniya istinnosti i obosnovannosti v strukture yazykovogo znacheniya [Dynamic approach to the analysis for correlating truth and validity in the structure of language meaning]. In: *Cennosti i smysl* [*Values and meanings*], 2009, 3, 92–110.

Lobanova, L.P. YAzyk kak energejya v koncepcii V. fon Gumbol'dta i L. Vajsgerbera [Language as energeia in the concept of W. von Humboldt and L. Weisgerber]. In: *Mir lingvistiki i kommunikacii* [*World of Linguistics and communication*], 2013, 3. Available at http://tverlingua.ru/

Sadokhin, A. P. «Svoj – chuzhoj» v mezhkul'turnoj kommunikacii: podhody k izucheniyu problemy [«Our – alien» in cross-cultural communication: approaches for problem study]. In *Voprosy kul'turologii* [*Issues of Cultural studies*], 2007, 3, 15–19.

Fasmer, M. *Etimologicheskij slovar' russkogo yazyka* [*Etymological dictionary of the Russian language*]. Moscow, 1987, 830 p.