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Меняющиеся культурные практики через призму русского и английского языков

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Аннотация

В статье рассматриваются изменения в мировых культурных практиках и их отражение в русском и английском языках. Мы постулируем положение о том, что знания о культурных практиках хранятся в ментальных моделях, которые являются частью концептуальной картины мира определенной нации. Концептуальная картина мира тесно связана с языковой картиной мира. Отношения между концептуальными и лингвистическими структурами являются многомерными и разнообразными. Вместе с культурными практиками меняются как ментальные модели, так и их языковые репрезентации. Статья концентрируется на анализе динамики взаимоотношений между социальными практиками, концептуальными картинами мира и новыми словами в английском и русском языках.

Ключевые слова: культурные практики, концептуальная картина мира, ментальные модели, динамика, языковые структуры, новые лексические единицы

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¹ We argue that for communication to be successful, the speaker and the hearer need common cognitive and communicative space. This is created by a common CWV.

² The CWVs of different cultures do not coincide, they may overlap and the greater the common overlapping area is, the more successful is the understanding between two cultures. Different cultures keep encountering one another. In this respect, the space between opens up the experience of “otherness”. “Encountering “the other” awakens awareness of a duality which results in an experience of difference”¹.

³ The Russian and English CWVs coincide in most sectors owing to globalization and commonality of values characteristic of the present historical epoch. However, both CWVs may be deficient in some respects and common sectors of CWV may be lacking some concepts. The knowledge of cultural practices is stored in mental (cognitive) models which form the CWV of particular nation. Conceptual structures are closely connected with language structures. So, the users of language are involved in the process of “co-wording the world”². Thus, there exist three worlds: 1) the real world; 2) the idea world (CWV); 3) the word world.

⁴ As long as CWV is subject to change we think it important to analyse the changes in the CWV and in the vocabulary of Russian and English for the past 30 years. We will concentrate on the analysis of English CWV due to the fact that the present paper was delivered in England.

⁵ The cognitive-communicative approach to the analysis of the dynamics of the English CWV raises the following questions: which concepts have been most frequently used in the process of categorization of cultural practices in the past few decades? Have there been changes in the list of basic concepts and categories? Have there been changes in the prototypes? What changes have taken place in the relations between conceptual structures (CWV) and linguistic structures?

⁶ We will try to answer some of these questions. Before we embark on the analysis proper I would like to provide some theoretical underpinning regarding cultural universals and differences. We draw on the outline of the cross-cultural universals proposed by G. P. Murdock³, an American anthropologist, who is still cited as authoritative. He defines cultural universals by a mix of purposive activities, functions and norms. The table below represents the differentiation of cross-cultural universals between three categories⁴.

⁷ **Group 1. Means of survival**

- 1.1 Food: agriculture, ethnobotany, weather control.
- 1.2 Health: medicine, surgery, cleanliness training, hygiene.
- 1.3 Pregnancy: pregnancy usages, obstetrics, postnatal care.

⁸ **Group 2. Amusements**

- 2.1 Arts and games: bodily adornment, hairstyle; decorative art, dancing, music; athletic sports, games.
- 2.2 Stories: folklore, mythology.

⁹ **Group 3. Social practices and organisation**

- 3.1 Secular practices: language, gestures, joking; numerals, calendar; greetings, visiting, gift-giving, hospitality; cooking, meal times, feasting, food taboos; dress, etiquette.

3.2 Religious practices: ethics; religious ritual, soul concepts, propitiation of supernatural beings; divination, luck superstitions, magic, dream interpretations; faith-healing; eschatology, funeral rites, mourning.

3.3 General organization: property rights, economic organisation, government, law, penal sanctions; cooperative labour, division of labour, trade; population policy.

3.4 Personal organisation: weaning, education, puberty customs, courtship, sexual restrictions, incest taboos, marriage; modesty concerning natural functions; personal names, family, kin groups, kinship names, inheritance rules; age-grading, status differentiation; housing, residence rules.

¹⁰ Although these universals are found in every culture, the form in which each is realised varies:

(1) The universals vary in plasticity: some change their form more rapidly than others.

(2) Some universals vary in degree of globalization⁵.

¹¹ According to McGregor, the items in Group 1 (Means of survival) are now part of science, the common culture of the industrialised world: they are highly globalised. Inter-cultural differences for universals in Group 1 are now few. Group 2 universals (Amusements) are less highly globalised than those of Group 1: inter-cultural differences are greater, though less than those in Group 3. Group 2 also tends to be less plastic, but it is more important for social identity.

¹² Social identity is defined most explicitly by Group 3 (Social practices and organisation), which are in general less plastic than Groups 1 and 2. Changes here come slowly: rapid changes provoke violent reactions. Forms of universals such as courtship and religious rituals change only over decades. Since in general the universals of Group 3 rouse the strongest social passions and are also less globalised, they are an important group for foreigners to understand⁶.

¹³ We will concentrate mostly on the analysis of the third group of universals (social practices). As we have mentioned above, the knowledge of social practices is stored in mental (cognitive) models which are part of CWV of a particular nation and are closely connected with language structures.

¹⁴ The relation between CWV and linguistic structures vary.

) New words may record phenomena which existed for many years and which have been already conceptualized but not yet verbalized e. g. contract marriage (marriage for a short period of time), open marriage (marriage in which both partners are free in their social and other types of relations), serial marriage (when both partners marry and remarry several times) etc.

¹⁵ b) One and the same concept may be verbalized by two lexical units of which one is new. The neologism normally ousts the existing term. Thus, the word “slums” has been ousted by “ghetto” and later by euphemism “inner city”⁷.

cf.: Mohammedan → Muslim

Asiatic → Asian

O-level → MGCSE

exercise classes → workouts

luncheonette → coffee shop

body-snatching → head hunting
job splitting → job sharing

¹⁶ c) The two words formerly correlating with two different concepts become absolute synonyms due to the merging of two concepts; in the course of time one of them drops out of use. In the 1986 the two terms “broker” and “jobber” were announced by the Oxford English Dictionary to be absolute synonyms; now, 30 years later, we witness the process of ousting the term “jobber” by “broker”.

¹⁷ d) The concept becomes outdated. In this case we deal with ephemerism (word denoting concepts and phenomena which live for a short period of time) e. g. Watergate, post-Watergate, pro-Watergate; Irangate, Congragate, Camilagate; vietnik, peacenik, hippie, yippie.

¹⁸ Now we will turn to the second question posed at the beginning of this paper. For the past three decades the list of the basic concepts of human society (“the alphabet of human thought”) has not been changed greatly (cf.: the list suggested by R. Jackendoff⁸: “thing”, “place”, “time”, “direction”, “action”, “manner”, “amount”, “smell”, etc.) But some of these concepts have been expanded or changed. Take, for example, the concepts of space and time. The concept of space can be viewed from different points of view. It may be:

- 1) physical space in its continuity and three-dimensional qualities;
- 2) mental space as a sum of mental representations corresponding to any sphere of human knowledge;
- 3) language space as a special kind of space including linguistic categories and the whole language system, e. g. parts of speech, synonymic and antonymic sets, etc.⁹

¹⁹ Mental and language spaces are closely interconnected. As L. Vygotsky pointed out, there are several processes taking place in space and time between the idea and the pronounced word: transition from the idea to the vague senses, then from vague senses to the inner speech (*lingua mentalis*) and then from inner speech to outer speech (pronounced word)¹⁰.

²⁰ The concept of physical space has changed due to improved communication and world networking, e. g. telecommuting — the practice of working at home being connected to one’s office through computer; e-banking — bank transactions made from home computer. Cf.: “The office blocks will be deserted as the workers telecommute in the suburbs”¹¹.

²¹ The concept of time has also undergone changes. Culture and technology shape language and in turn language shapes the dynamics of the concept “TIME” at different stages of cultural and technological development. For many centuries The Christian macroconcept of time has been central in the CWV of the English-speaking communities. Christian doctrine has conceptually shaped everyday activities, the way of life, moral and ethical values as well as the overall direction of cultural development¹².

²² The basic conceptual metaphor of time in the Christian macroconcept is “TIME IS THE GIFT OF GOD”.

²³ Conceptual metaphors as conventionalized cognitive models are based on mapping relations from a source semantic domain to a target semantic domain, where

the source domain concepts are taken to be “literal” (more concrete) and the target domain concepts are “figurative” (abstract). Some of them are universal, some are culture-specific.

²⁴ In the centre of the source domain “Gift” there are concepts of “giver” and “receiver”. Such concepts as “value”, “purpose”, “usage”, and “attitude towards the giver” are secondary. Each of these concepts is mapped on to the target domain of “Time”¹³.

²⁵ A wide range of its linguistic manifestations is found both in the Holy Scriptures and in English and Russian literary and non-literary sources. For example, in the British national anthem, written in the form of a prayer of the whole British nation and as such reflecting time’s comprehension by the whole British community, the “gift of God” metaphor is manifested in the verse: “God save the Queen: Send her victorious, Happy and glorious, Long to reign over us”.

²⁶ In American English the instantiation of this conceptual metaphor is presented by such contemporary American proverbs as “A moment of time is a moment of mercy”, with the time conceived of as bestowed by merciful God.

²⁷ Gradual deviation from Christian doctrine during the late Middle Ages, Renaissance and Reformation resulted in disregard of the initially well understood spiritual value of time as a divine gift of merciful God.

²⁸ Time became one of the three main factors to shape European progress — apart from work and money. After the industrial revolution “time became the basic medium and resource for the new industries and for the novel social value of productivity. Time was referred to as a resource, the more efficient use of which could lead to increased productivity. As a result, time became a major dimension around which society was organized”¹⁴. Time was commodified. With the introduction of the division-of-labour principle labour became abstract, emptied of content, sold as abstract units of time¹⁵. Money grew into the “universal standard of value of all things”¹⁶, and time in a market-dependent system began to equal money¹⁷. This led to the gradual “privatization of time”, which “was a major stimulus to the individualism that was an ever more salient aspect of Western civilization... As such it was ... key to personal achievement and productivity”¹⁸.

²⁹ The use of time to increase one’s own individual material wealth resulted in the gradual shift in the source domain of the TIME IS THE GIFT OF GOD conceptual metaphor: the concept of “giver” in the source domain has been replaced by the concept of “owner” in the source domain of a new conceptual metaphor TIME IS MONEY. The central concept is accompanied by such concepts as “sale”, “trade”, “cost”, “consumption”, “resource”, “possession”, which are mapped on to the target domain of time.

³⁰ The monetary time concept spread widely during the 17th — 19th centuries, accompanying the gradual development of a market-driven economy. Thus, in 1831 there appeared a word combination time bill “a bill of exchange which contains a definite or determinable date for payment in contract to a demand or right bill”, in 1853 time deposit “another term for a savings account or certificate of deposit in a

commercial bank”, in 1863 time draft “a draft payable at a definite time in the future”, and in 1927 time payment “an installment payment”¹⁹.

³¹ In contemporary English a temporal component is crucial for verbalizing a variety of banking transactions — cf. the old legal expressions “time is of the essence” / “time is the essence of the contract”²⁰. Consequently the lexeme time is frequently used in combinations with words of the trade or banking semantic field: time money “money loaned for a definite period”; time-sharing “form of property ownership; a compound annual rental paid in advance”; time utility etc.²¹

³² The ever-growing demand for further timesaving has assisted the telecommunications revolution, which began in the 1960s²². Now computer technology is “so ubiquitous that it is as important as safe drinking water and electricity”²³. In the past four decades “the new information technologies ... through the combination of telecommunications, fast transportation, and computerized flexible production systems”²⁴ have changed traditional time concepts. Computers “increase communication efficiency by allowing the instantaneous transmission of large amounts of information over long distances”²⁵. As Ury points out, new machines and technologies “dramatically compress or shrink time-space. These technologies carry people, information, money, images and risks, and flow within and across national societies in increasingly brief moments of time”²⁶. Consequently, “modern electronic communications have influenced the social significance of the present in terms of its speed, form and distance”²⁷.

³³ Due to the ongoing process of globalization the whole planet is being rapidly “connected in global networks of information and images that travel throughout the world instantly”²⁸. “The most fundamental aspect of globalization is the pervasive compression of time and space, affecting the way we think, feel and act, introducing speed and proximity as defining attributes of our daily human experience”²⁹. Information technology is said to have annihilated time, which disappears in the simultaneity of electronic communication, instant messaging, and information retrieval³⁰.

³⁴ The central conceptual metaphor organizing the understanding of time in the new technocentric macroconcept of time is the TIME IS A VIRTUAL ENTITY metaphor.

³⁵ We attempt a definition of the main prototypical conceptual features of “virtual” time as follows: immediacy, simultaneity, instantaneity, acceleration, solidity, cyclic character, abstraction, hyper-fragmentation, compression.

³⁶ On the lexical level the most frequent attribute of time — “simultaneity” — is verbalized by the adjectives synchronous, bisynchronous, concurrent, quasi-parallel.

³⁷ For the past 30 years there has appeared new conceptual metaphor: “Time is a solid structure which can be deformed or distorted”. The instantiations of this conceptual metaphor are numerous. For example, “time-warp” — an imaginary discontinuity or distortion in the flow of time. The concept “time as a physical entity” having form can be illustrated by such linguistic examples as “time-frame” — defined period of time in which something is planned to happen, “window” — spaces of spare time in a schedule or timetable; cf. “time-slot”, “time-slice”.

38 So time conceptual dynamics in English is based on categorical shifts, accompanied by changes in the source domains of the conceptual metaphors. The processes of “monetarization” and “virtualization” have led to the gradual oblivion of the spiritual value of time and may make human life deprived of its everlasting meaning.

39 Apart from changes in the basic concepts which are highly globalized, there have appeared new concepts which have been embedded into both traditional and new domains of the CWV. As it is well known, frames and domains can have different levels of embedding. For example, the new concept acid fog, heat islands, energy belt, urban forest, have been embedded into the relatively new domain of environmental protection. The above-mentioned telecommuting, e-shopping, have been embedded into the domain of IT. But the number of new domains is quite limited. The prevailing tendency is embedding new concepts into traditional domains. Here differentiation according to different levels of embedding is more vivid. For example, in the social domain the concept of communitarism (life in “global village”) has become a hyponym (sub-domain) in regard to the whole social domain, and a hyperonym (super-domain) for the concept of “collective responsibility”, which in its turn serves a more general term for the “neighbourhood watch” (an organised programme of vigilance by ordinary citizens in order to help the police combat crime in their neighbourhood; crime prevention achieved by this method). That means that one of sub-concepts of the domain can in turn be a domain itself.

40 The traditional domain of criminal activities has been enriched by the new concept of “gungsta” (collective criminality) which has become a separate sub-domain functioning as a hyperonym for a group of such words as steaming (activity of passing rapidly in a gang through public place, robbing bystanders by force of number), wolf-pack (a group of marauding young people engaged in mugging) and wilding (a kind of violent robbing), cf. jamming, drive-by, side-walking. In Russian CWV the concept of “najezd” (raider’s attack) was very popular in the 1990s. So we can speak about changes in the prototype of the criminal. The boundaries of the category are expanded, and the feature (“collective” character of criminal activity) which was at the periphery of the category has moved to its centre.

41 The domain of health care has been enriched by the new concept “a complex of syndromes”, which in its turn has become a hyperonym domain for such sub-concepts as “agoraphobia” (a complex of fears — fears of open spaces, bridges, crowds in the shops, etc.), “tight/sick building syndrome” (a complex of allergies caused by artificial materials used in modern construction works).

42 Among other traditional domains most actively enriched by new concepts mention should be made of Money and Finance, Politics, Music, Arts, Drug Abuse.

43 One of the tendencies in changing cultural practices is the growing anthropocentrism. This results in a more detailed categorisation and sub-categorisation of the phenomenon homo sapiens in all his/her hypostases homo faber (working man), homo loquens (speaking man), homo ludens (playing man), homo agens (acting man). In the past few decades the most active hypostases turned out to be: 1) homo ludens: e. g. couch potato, cacooner (a person who spends most of his time at home watching TV), mouse potato (a person who spends most of the time computer-gaming), cyberserfer.

Gamification has become one of the key concepts in both English and Russian CWV. The second most active hypostasis is homo agens: e. g. do-it-yourselfer, do-it-yourselfism, all-at-once-ness (when many things are performed at the same time), life-boat ethics; spin-doctor etc.

⁴⁴ Another important tendency is activation of socially relevant factors in the process of conceptualisation and verbalisation of cultural practices, which is manifested in the increased role of such parameters as social, professional status of the speakers, age, ethnic identity and gender. Every social, professional, age, gender and ethnic group has their own CWV. On the one hand, one and the same object of reality will be categorised and verbalised differently by the representatives of the above-mentioned groups. On the other hand, one and the same linguistic unit is perceived differently by the representatives of various social groups. For example, the representatives of the elderly generation in the US would use ice-box and wireless in reference to refrigerator and radio, while the younger generation would use respectively fridge and boombox³¹. An example of absolute equivalent of ice-box can be found in the language of Russian emigrants of the first wave in France — “lednik”.

⁴⁵ In Russian social practices the word “zazhigat” is one of the latest newcomers.

⁴⁶ **Conclusions**

The main findings of our analysis of the changing cultural practices through the lens of Russian and English languages may be summarized in the following points.

⁴⁷ First, we have proved that knowledge of cultural practices is stored in mental (cognitive) models which are part of CWV of a particular nation. CWV is closely connected with language structures. As cultural practices are subject to change, so are the mental models and language structures. We have shown this connection through the analysis of the dynamics of the conceptual metaphors of time.

⁴⁸ Second, we have also proved that apart from changes in the basic concepts, there have appeared new concepts which have been embedded into both traditional and new domains. We have analysed the traditional domain of criminal activities, IT etc. We have tried to answer the questions regarding the concepts which have been most frequently used in the process of categorization of the cultural practices in the past few decades; the changes in the list of basic concepts and categories; and the changes in the prototypes.

⁴⁹ Third, the relations between conceptual and linguistic structures are multi-dimensional. New words record phenomena which have been already conceptualized but not yet verbalized. One and the same fragment of the CWV may be verbalized by two lexical units one of which is new. The neologism normally ousts the existing term. The two words formerly correlating with two different concepts become absolute synonyms due to the merging of two concepts; in the course of time one of them falls out of use.

⁵⁰ Fourth, we have defined the main tendencies in changing cultural practices, such as growing anthropocentrism, activation of socially relevant factors etc.

⁵¹ Our analysis entails further research in the sphere of cultural differences between cultural practices, mental models and their linguistic instantiations English and Russian.

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The Changing Cultural Practices of the World Through the Lens of Russian and English Languages

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Abstract

The article concentrates on the changes in the cultural practices of the world and their reflection in the Russian and English languages. We argue that knowledge of cultural practices is stored in mental (cognitive) models which are part of the conceptual worldview (CWV) of a particular nation and are closely connected with language structures. The relations between conceptual and linguistic structures are multi-dimensional and not uni-directional. As cultural practices are subject to change, so are the mental models and language structures. The emphases are on the analysis of the dynamic relations between cultural practices, CWV and their linguistic instantiations in English and Russian.

Keywords: cultural practices, conceptual worldview, mental models, dynamics, language structures, new lexical units

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