СЕКЦІЯ 2
МІЖКУЛЬТУРНА КОМУНІКАЦІЯ

PRAGMATIC DIMENSION OF CROSS-CULTURAL SEMIOSIS

Andreichuk N.I., Doctor of Philology, Professor,
Ivan Franko Lviv National University

The article provides an insight into the notion of cultural semiosis. It is postulated that the cultural mechanism of transforming information into text is but another definition of semiosis. The article also provides argumentation to support the belief that cross-cultural semiosis is based on cultural schemata in the context of differences of lingual communities' basic experiences. The study of differences in expectations based on these cultural schemata is viewed as a part of cross-cultural pragmatics.

Key words: semiotics of culture, culture text, cultural semiosis, cultural schemata, cross-cultural pragmatics.

У статті розглядається поняття культурного семіозису, який тлумачиться як культурний механізм перетворення інформації в текст. Наведено аргументи на підтримку твердження, що в основі міжкультурного семіозису лежать випрацьовані мовленнєвими спільнотами культурні моделі, вивчення яких є завданням міжкультурної прагматики.

Ключові слова: семіотика культури, текст культури, культурний семіозис, культурна модель, міжкультурна праг-матика.

Андрейчук Н.И. ПРАГМАТИЧЕСКОЕ ИЗМЕРЕНИЕ МЕЖКУЛЬТУРНОГО СЕМИОЗИСА
В статье рассматривается понятие культурного семиозиса, который определяется как культурный механизм превращения информации в текст. Статья также содержит аргументацию в поддержку утверждения, что межкультурный семиозис основывается на культурных моделях, которые вырабатываются языковыми сообществами, а их изучение – задача межкультурной прагматики.

Ключевые слова: семиотика культуры, текст культуры, культурный семиозис, культурная модель, межкультурная прагматика.

The fate of the earth depends
on cross-cultural communication
(Deborah Tannen)

The concept of culture text is the core of the semiotic studies on culture. But even more important is the cultural mechanism of transforming information into text: sense generation process. Any generation of sense is the activity of culture in its most general definition. This article aims at offering a new insight into the notion of semiosis as the communication-oriented process of generating culture texts and providing new approaches to the research of pragmatic dimension of cross-cultural communication.

Yuriy Lotman views communication as the circulation of texts in culture and relations between the text and the reader, a typology of different, although complementary processes: 1) communication of the addresser and the addressee, 2) communication between the audience and cultural tradition, 3) communication of the reader with him/herself, 4) communication of the reader with the text, 5) communication between the text and cultural tradition [1, p. 276–277]. In his article «On the semiosphere» the first edition of which was published in Russian in 1984 in «Trudy po Znakovym Sistemam» [2][1] Yuriy Lotman coined the term **semiosphere** and claims that outside of it semiosis itself cannot exist [3, p. 208]. Edna Andrews agrees that the concept of semiosphere is helpful in better understanding of semiosis, which is «a system-level phenomenon engaging multiple sign complexes that are given simultaneously across spatio-temporal boundaries» [4, p. xx]. Yuriy Lotman's ideas concerning semiosphere were published in English in the book entitled «Universe of the Mind» [1] and it is not only the title of the work but the metaphor of the semiosis

---

[1] The latest English translation of this article was published in 2005 in the English edition of «Sign Systems Studies» [3]. «Sign System Studies» is a well known academic journal on semiotics edited at the Department of Semiotics of the University of Tartu. It was initially published in Russian and since 1998 – in English with Russian and Estonian language abstracts. The journal was established by Yuriy Lotman as «Trudy po Znakovym Sistemam» in 1964. Since 1998 it has been edited by Kalevi Kull, Mihhail Lotman, and Peeter Torop. The journal is available online from the Philosophy Documentation Center and starting 2012 also on an open access platform.

itself. Culture is presented as a thinking mechanism that transforms information into text and a space of mind for the production of semiosis. Thus there are two different processes in the constitution of the semiosphere: the processing of information and the emergence of semiosis. These two processes not only articulate information and culture but also show how the universe of the mind functions to produce significant complex systems, i.e. codes and languages [5, p. 89].

If we accept that semiotic space emerges inside the experience of transforming information into sign systems, then information processes are the core of the semiotics of culture and **the cultural mechanism of transforming information into text is but another definition of semiosis.**

Before trying to apply this understanding of cultural semiosis to researching cross-cultural communication it should be mentioned that according to Peirce semiosis starts from a given **outer sign.** The question of who produced it in the first place, and why, falls outside the scope of his concept of semiosis. This bias is confirmed by his choice of terminology, i.e., especially of interpretant, that is **the inner sign** as an explanation, as a translation, of the outer sign. From the wider perspective of communication, or sign exchange, an outer sign can only be considered given to a particular sign observer after it has been produced by a particular sign engineer. Valentin Voloshinov[2] can be seen to apply this communication perspective right from the start of his theoretical development. This scholar emphasizes the representational nature of signs. He states that a sign does not simply exist as a part of a reality – it reflects and refracts another reality [7, p. 10] and he also expresses the communication perspective of sign: Signs can arise only on **interindividual territory.**

Ten years later Pierce's pupil Charles Morris introduces the interpreter as the component of semiosis and argues that the latter includes: 1) the sign vehicle (i.e. the object or event which functions as a sign), 2) the designatum (i.e. the kind of object or class of objects which the sign designates), 3) the interpretant (i.e. the disposition of an interpreter to initiate a response-sequence as a result of perceiving the sign), and 4) the interpreter (i.e. the person for whom the sign-vehicle functions as a sign) [8][3]. He devides semiotics into three interrelated sciences: 1) syntactics (the study of the methods by which signs may be combined to form compound signs), 2) semantics (the study of the signification of signs), and 3) pragmatics (the study of the origins, uses, and effects of signs). Thus semiosis has syntactical, semantical, and pragmatical levels or dimensions. While the syntactical dimension of semiosis is governed by the relations which signs have with each other, the semantical dimension is governed by the relations which signs have to the objects or events which they signify, and the pragmatical dimension is governed by the relations which signs have to their producers and interpreters.

Charles Morris' definition of pragmatics as the study of the relation of signs to their interpreters has been accepted and developed by different scholars. George Yule in his «Pragmatics», which has become classical, defines four areas that pragmatics as the type of study is concerned with: 1) the study of meaning as communicated by the speaker (or writer) and interpreted by a listener (or reader); 2) the interpretation of what people mean in a particular context and how the context influences what is said; 3) how a great deal of what is said is recognized as part of what is communicated; 4) what determines the choice between the said and unsaid [9, p. 3]. He emphasizes that pragmatics is appealing because it is about how people make sense of each other linguistically, but it can be a frustrating area of study because it requires us to make sense of people and what they have in mind [9, p. 4]. From the first pages of the above mentioned book G.Yule attracts attention to cross-cultural differences that account for the differences in the contextual meaning communicated by a speaker or writer and in the interpretation of a listener or reader. Communicants belonging to one lingual and social group follow general patterns of behavior (including lingual) expected within the group. G.Yule describes his experience of answering questions about his health when he first lived in Saudi Arabia [9, p. 5]. He tended to answer them with his familiar routine responses of **«Okay»** or **«Fine»** but soon discovered that pragmatically appropriate in that context would be to use a phrase that had the literal meaning **«Praise to God».** Thus the phrase he used conveyed the meaning that he was a social outsider: more was being communicated

---

[2] Recently, the validity of Voloshinov's authorship of the book «Marxism and the Philosophy of Language» has come into question. This book was first published in Leningrad in 1929 under the title «Marksizm i filosofiia iazyka: Osnovnye problemy sotsiologitseskogo metoda v nauke o iazyke (Marxism and the Philosophy of Language: Basic Problems of the Sociological Method in the Science of Language)». It has been suggested that it was in fact Mikhail Bakhtin who was the real author. It is probable we may never know the truth but it is worth pointing out that although this claim is now accepted uncritically by many commentators, it rests on certain unsubstantiated facts and contradictory assumptions [6].

[3] «Writings on the General Theory of Signs» is a collection of some of Morris's most important writings on semiotics and on the theory of language. Part One is «Foundations of the Theory of Signs» (1938). Part Two is «Signs, Language, and Behavior» (1946). Part Three («Five Semiotical Studies») includes the first chapter of «Signification and Significance» (1964).

than was being said. Thus cultural semiosis in this case is based on **cultural schemata in the context on differences of our basic experiences.** The study of differences in expectations based on these cultural schemata as a part of a new area of investigation: **cross-cultural studies** – sprang up in the 1980 s. Its emergence is associated with the names of such world-famous scholars as Anna Wierzbicka, Cliff Goddard, Deborah Tannen and others. The fundamental tenet of cross-cultural pragmatics, as understood by Anna Wierzbicka, is based on the conviction that profound and systematic differences in ways of speaking in different societies and different communities reflect different cultural values and different hierarchies of these values. To study different cultures in their culture-specific features we need a universal perspective: and we need a culture-independent analytical framework. Such a framework can be found in **universal human concepts,** i.e. in concepts which are inherent in any human culture [10, p. 9]. The scholar believes that we cannot understand a distant culture in «its own terms» without understanding it at the same time «in our own terms». What we need for real «human understanding» is to find terms which would be both «theirs» and «ours». And she suggests that we can find such universal concepts in the universal alphabet of human thoughts suggested by Gottfried Wilhelm Leinbnitz (1646–1716) [10, p.10]. His philosophic-linguistic project is based on four principal tasks: 1) construction of the system of primes arranged as an alphabet of knowledge or general encyclopedia; 2) drawing up of an ideal grammar based on the template of simplified Latin; 3) introducing rules of pronunciation; 4) arrangement of lexicon containing real signs using which the speaker automatically acquires the ability to construct a true sentence. The system of signs suggested by Leibniz is based on the principle that language has to be improved through the introduction of the general terms denoting general ideas. People use words as signs of ideas and this is not because there are intrinsic connections between some articulate sounds and certain ideas (in this case, people would have only one language), but because of the arbitrary agreement, by virtue of which certain words are selected to designate certain ideas [11, p. 242] Leinbnitz's idea of the alphabet of knowledge correlates with the optimal semantic metalanguage suggested by C. Goddard and A. Wierzbicka for cross-linguistic semantics. They believe that such a metalanguage ought to be based as transparently as possible on ordinary natural languages, and furthermore, it ought to consist as far as possible of elements whose meanings are present in all natural languages, i.e. of universally lexicalized meanings [12, p. 7]. Thus universal concepts are viewed as indefinable, i.e. semantically simple words and morphemes of natural languages such as **I, you, someone, something, this, think, say, want, do** which can be found in all the languages of the world. But it is in a clash with another language that the distinctness of a language (as a separate identity) reveals itself [13, p. 19].

The study of semiosis, which was previously defined as the generation of culture texts, can provide the penetration into a system of inherited conceptions expressed in sign forms by means of which people communicate, perpetuate and develop their knowledge about and attitudes toward life. To look at semiosis as the construction of meaning by the speakers from different cultures is the principal task of cross-cultural pragmatics. Deborah Tannen emphasizes that in analyzing the pragmatics of cross cultural communication, we are analyzing language itself and that there are eight levels of differences in signaling how speakers mean what they say, namely: when to talk, what to say, pacing and pausing, listenership, intonation, formulaicity, indirectness, cohesion and coherence [14]. These levels can be explained through cultural schemata or models of culture.

It should be mentioned that there is no clear-cut **differentiation of the research tasks and objectives of contrastive pragmatics vs cross-cultural pragmatics.** Floriy Batsevitch, a prominent Ukrainian researcher in the field of communication theory and linguistic pragmatics who works at Ivan Franko Lviv National University, states that contrastive pragmatics studies the manifestation of pragmatic factors in different languages and the subject of cross-cultural pragmatics are similarities, differences and variance in the expression of pragmatic meanings in different lingual cultures as determined by cultural values and ideas of different ethnic communities [15, p. 6]. In seems that when a researcher applies cultural schemata as tertium comparationis for the contrastive analysis of their expression in two or more languages he/she works in the field of contrastive pragmatics. Like, for example, Iryna Prykarpatska from Jagiellonian University in Krakow carries out **contrastive pragmatic study** of complaints in American English and Ukrainian, though in the title of her article it is indicated that it is cross-cultural [16]. The scholar suggested to use six dimensions worked out by Hofstede Geert and Hofstede Gert-Jan (the first four) and Edward Hall (the last

two): 1) Power Distance Index; 2) Collectivism vs Individualism; 3) Femininity vs Masculinity; 4) Uncertainty avoidance; 5) High vs Low Context; 6) Monochronism vs polychronism – as tertium comparationis for contrastive analysis. Having analyzed different aspects of the verbal coding of complaints she has discovered that the complaints made by Ukrainians to their friends are more direct and spontaneous, than those performed by North Americans. All this lead us to the main conclusion that the norms of friendship in the two cultures under analysis are different. According to Ukrainian norms friends should be open and sincere with each other, whereas respect for and the right to each other's personal autonomy, which is highly valued in North American society, requires greater indirectness on the part of its members. The differences in the friendship norms agree with North American high and Ukrainian low scores along the individualism scale.

Contrastive pragmatics and cross-cultural pragmatics both deal with pragmatic dimension of cultural semiosis but the former aims at discovering similarities and differences in the expression of relations between language and context in culture texts of two or more different languages, while the latter studies these relations in reference to cross-cultural communication.

One can single out three dimensions or axes of pragmatic research which allow to differentiate between different «types» of pragmatics: 1) the first dimension (generalist vs particularist approach) – the universal pragmatics and the language-specific pragmatics which has a look at the pragmatic system of an individual language; 2) the second dimension (studying languages in isolation or in comparison) – culture-specific pragmatics and cross-cultural pragmatics; 3) the third dimension (diachronic vs synchronic) – language-state pragmatics and evolutionary pragmatics.

Summing up it should be emphasized that defining culture as the generation of senses one can claim that cultural semiosis as the generation of culture-texts is the heart of communication and provides for defining a group of people as a lingual and cultural community.

REFERENCES:

1. Lotman Y.M. Universe of the Mind: A Semiotic Theory of Culture [Transl. by A. Shukman; intr. by U. Eco] / Y.M. Lotman. – London, New York: I. B.Tauris & Co Ltd., 1990. – 288 p.
2. Лотман Ю.М. О семиосфере / Ю.М. Лотман //Ученые записки Тартуского университета. Труды по знаковым системам. – 1984. – Т. 17. – № 641. – С. 5–3.
3. Lotman J. On the semiosphere / Jurij Lotman // Sign Systems Studies, 2005. – 33 (1). – P. 205–229.
4. Andrews E. Introduction / E. Andrews // J. Lotman. Culture and Explosion. – The Hague: Mouton de Gruyter, 2004. – P. XIX–XXVII.
5. Machado I. Lotman's scientific investigatory boldness: The semiosphere as a critical theory of communication in culture / Irene Machado // Sign Systems Studies, 2011. – 39 (1). – P. 81–104.
6. Parrington John. In Perspective: Valentin Voloshinov [Electronic recource]. –Mode of access: http://pubs. socialistreviewindex.org.uk/isj75/parring.htm.
7. Voloshinov V.N. Marxism and the Philosophy of Language [Trans. L. Matejka and I.R. Titunik] / V.N.Voloshinov. – New York: Seminar Press, 1973.
8. Morris Ch. Writings on the General Theory of Sign [Ed. by T.A. Sebeok] / Charles Morris. – The Hague: Mouton, 1971. – 486 p.
9. Yule G. Pragmatics / George Yule. – Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996. – 138 p.
10. Wierzbicka A. Cross-cultural Pragmatics: The Semantics of Human Interaction / Anna Wierzbicka. – Berlin-New York: Mouton de Gruyter, 2003. – 502 p.
11. Лейбниц Г. В. Новые опыты о человеческом разуме / Г.В. Лейбниц. – М.: СОЦЭКГИЗ, 1936. – 484 с.
12. Goddard C. Men, Women and Children: The Conceptual Semantics of Basic Social Categories / Cliff Goddard, Anna Wierzbicka. – [Elrctronic resource]. – Mode of access: http://www.colorado.edu/ling/courses/LAM5430/More5430e-reserves/Basic_Social_Categories.pdf.
13. Wierzbicka A. Understanding Cultures through Their Key Words / A. Wierzbicka. – New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997. – 317 p.
14. Tannen D. The pragmatics of Cross-Cultural Communication / Deborah Tannen // Applied Linguistics, 1984. – Vol. 5. – № 3. – P. 189–195.
15. Бацевич Ф.С. Нариси з лінгвістичної прагматики: Монографія / Ф.С. Бацевич. – Львів: ПАЇС, 2010. – 336 с.
16. Prykarpatska I. Why are you late? Cross-cultural Pragmatic Study of Complaints in American English and Ukrainian / I. Prykarpatska // Revista Alicantina de Estudios Ingleses. – 2008 (21). – P. 87–102.