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UNITS OF CULTURAL CODES: CHALLENGES IN THE REALM OF SEMANTICS

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Annotation: Cultural symbols serve as powerful conduits for the transmission of shared meanings within societies, embodying complex layers of significance that resonate with individuals on both conscious and subconscious levels. These symbols, ranging from iconic imagery to linguistic expressions, are integral to the fabric of cultural identity and communication. However, the interpretation and understanding of cultural symbols are not devoid of challenges, particularly within the intricate domain of semantics. This article delves into the nuanced realm of cultural symbols, exploring the hurdles and complexities encountered in deciphering their semantics. By unraveling these challenges, we aim to illuminate the profound interplay between cultural symbols and meaning construction, shedding light on the intricate tapestry of human communication and societal cohesion.

Key words: cultural code, primary semiotic system, secondary semiotic system, connotations and associations

ЕДИНИЦЫ КУЛЬТУРНЫХ КОДОВ: ПРОБЛЕМЫ В ОБЛАСТИ СЕМАНТИКИ

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Аннотация: Культурные символы служат мощными проводниками для передачи общих смыслов внутри общества, воплощая в себе сложные слои значений, которые находят отклик у людей как на сознательном, так и на подсознательном уровне. Эти символы, от знаковых образов до языковых выражений, являются неотъемлемой частью культурной идентичности и коммуникации. Однако интерпретация и понимание культурных символов не лишены проблем, особенно в сложной области семантики. Эта статья углубляется в тонкую сферу культурных символов, исследуя препятствия и сложности, возникающие при расшифровке их семантики. Разгадывая эти проблемы, мы стремимся осветить глубокую взаимосвязь между культурными символами и построением значений, проливая свет на сложную картину человеческого общения и социальной сплоченности.

Ключевые слова: культурный код, первичная семиотическая система, вторичная семиотическая система, коннотации и ассоциации.

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Annotatsiya: Madaniy ramzlar jamiyatda umumiy ma'nolarni bildirish uchun kuchli vosita bo'lib xizmat qiladi, ular ham ongli, ham ongsiz darajada odamlar bilan rezonanslashadigan murakkab ma'no qatlamlarini o'zida mujassamlashtiradi. Bu ramzlar, ikonik tasvirlardan lingvistik iboralargacha, madaniy o'ziga xoslik va muloqotning ajralmas qismidir. Biroq, madaniy ramzlarni talqin qilish va tushunish, ayniqsa, murakkab semantika sohasida qiyinchiliklardan xoli emas. Ushbu maqola madaniy ramzlarning nozik sohasini o'rganib, ularning semantikasini ochishda duch keladigan to'siqlar va qiyinchiliklarni tahlil qiladi. Ushbu muammolarni ochib berish

orqali biz madaniy timsollar va ma'no qurilishi o'rtasidagi chuqur munosabatlarni yoritishni, insoniy muloqot va ijtimoiy birdamlikning murakkab manzarasini yoritishni maqsad qilganmiz.

Kalit so'zlar: madaniy kod, birlamchi semiotik tizim, ikkilamchi semiotik tizim, konnotatsiyalar va assotsiatsiyalar

INTRODUCTION

Objects in our environment, both natural and man-made, often serve not only practical functions but also take on symbolic significance, carrying additional meanings. The names assigned to such objects contribute to interconnected secondary semiotic systems known as codes, representing various aspects of national culture such as somatic, zoomorphic, and natural landscape codes. Each unit within these codes holds cultural meanings, some of which are consciously recognized by individuals within a particular culture, while others remain implicit, representing gaps that necessitate linguistic and cultural analysis for explication.

Cultural codes are likened to grids through which culture interprets, categorizes, and evaluates the world, reflecting ancient archetypal ideas inherent to human perception. These codes play a crucial role in shaping the national cultural landscape, functioning as pivotal elements within it. Culture itself is characterized by a diversity of codes, each contributing uniquely to the cultural framework. N.I. Tolstoy explored the interplay between codes extensively, particularly in the context of rites and rituals. Culture is described as semiotically multilingual, utilizing various languages within a single text. In this context, a text is not solely a sequence of words but encompasses actions, symbolic objects, and related speech sequences [Tolstoy, p. 23].

For instance, viewing a ritual as a textual expression in the semiotic language of culture reveals three distinct forms or codes: verbal (involving words), real (involving objects or things with objective significance), and actional (involving active behaviors or rituals). This multifaceted understanding highlights the intricate relationship between cultural codes and their role in shaping cultural practices and expressions. Analyzing rites, rituals, and various cultural practices, the elements of

the verbal, real, and actional codes often function interchangeably as synonyms within a single semiotic language. As noted by Tolstoy, these elements can be interchangeable and may even be reducible in certain contexts. The recognition of these three codes - verbal, real, and actional - extends beyond rites and rituals to encompass broader cultural expressions.

The term "real code of culture" encompasses diverse codes, each constituting its own distinct "semantic field," such as natural landscape, architectural-household, and material codes, in addition to potentially including zoomorphic, somatic, and other codes. Each of these codes is examined individually to unravel its unique characteristics and implications. Furthermore, elements of both the real and actional codes within culture can be verbalized, acquiring names and thereby becoming integrated into the verbal code. This emphasis on the verbal code signifies its foundational importance within cultural analysis. It is important to note that while some codes can be effectively translated into verbal forms, complete equivalence may not always be attainable. Nonetheless, in certain instances, this translatability can be achieved with a high degree of adequacy, albeit not absolute.

MATERIALS AND METHODS (MODEL)

In our research, we will concentrate solely on linguistic units that carry distinct meanings determined by the cultural code to which they pertain. When discussing somatic and other cultural codes, we are referring to various "subsets" of the verbal code. This implies that when examining units within the natural landscape code, our focus is not on the physical objects themselves, but on the names assigned to those objects. For instance, when discussing "forest" as a component of this code, the emphasis lies on the term "forest" rather than the actual natural entity. The intricate relationship between a name and its cultural significance within the code will be explored in more depth in subsequent discussions.

Next, we must address the interplay between the names that interest us as components of natural language and units of the cultural code. These names exist within two semiotic systems: the natural language system as words and the somatic code system, where they acquire specialized meanings distinct from their linguistic

counterparts. R. Barth highlighted the emergence of primary meaning systems within human society based on natural language, emphasizing the transition of specific signs between two semiotic systems. Namely, the sign from the primary system functions as a signifier in the secondary system. Moving forward, we will view the names associated with the somatic cultural code as constituents of a secondary semiotic system derived from this code, representing second-level signs. Our approach aims to dissociate these names, if possible, from their general linguistic sense as primary-level signs. Rather than focusing on individual word connotations, our analysis delves into an interconnected network of symbolic meanings that collectively shape a distinct lexicon.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

We may provisionally designate natural language as the primary semiotic system and the cultural code as the secondary semiotic system. While the cultural code is inherently part of natural language in a broad sense, it constitutes a distinct system of meanings that diverges from those conventionally outlined in standard dictionaries and grammars. A comparison of the semantics of terms such as "*blood*" and "*throat*" in natural language versus the somatic code of culture illustrates this distinction. According to S.I. Ozhegov's dictionary, "blood" is defined as the red liquid circulating in the body responsible for nourishing all cells [Ozhegov, p. 282], while "throat" encompasses various meanings related to anatomy and physical structures. However, these definitions do not acknowledge the symbolic connotations attributed within cultural contexts, such as blood symbolizing vital energy or the throat metaphorically representing freedom or constraint in expressions like "*hold by the throat*."

Names associated with specific cultural codes carry a nuanced meaning beyond their general linguistic interpretation, serving as signs within a secondary semiotic system. This additional layer of meaning is not contingent on situational factors but rather ingrained in the language unit. Traditional explanatory dictionaries typically overlook these cultural nuances, underscoring the importance of identifying and incorporating these meanings into lexicographic practices. Addressing these

challenges facilitates a shift from abstract theorizing towards the practical inclusion of cultural codes in dictionary descriptions. This endeavor, in turn, contributes to advancing the understanding of linguistic worldviews, national mentalities, and the distinctive manifestations of universal ideas within specific cultural contexts. By elucidating these aspects, modern humanities can deepen their exploration of national expressions and perceptions of the world.

With the aim of elucidating the semantic properties of the verbal constructs under scrutiny, it becomes imperative to contemplate the nature of the meaning being investigated, its semantic characterization, necessitating an exploration of fundamental issues in semantic theory. The examination will focus on elucidating the significance of key concepts such as symbol, meaning, sense, connotation, and association, which exhibit multifaceted interpretations in contemporary linguistic discourse. It is crucial to underscore that this endeavor does not aspire to provide an exhaustive analysis of these concepts; rather, it seeks to advocate for a particular approach within the current scholarly landscape, emphasized by its non-exclusive nature and absence of a claim to absolute truth.

Scholars have previously discussed the unique semantic dimensions of certain terms that straddle two semiotic systems. Notably, C. Lévi-Strauss introduced the notion of "mythemes" to highlight this phenomenon, positing that in narratives, entities such as *kings and shepherdesses* embody dual meanings, transcending their literal interpretation [Lévi-Strauss ,p .428]. Consequently, a distinction is made between the conventional signification of a term and its mythological or symbolic connotation. Nevertheless, objections have been raised asserting that such distinct semantics are superfluous, contending that connotation suffices for analysis. It is essential to acknowledge that the concept of connotation has become a versatile theoretical tool, purportedly unlocking previously inscrutable realms of inquiry, ostensibly encompassing all that defies traditional explanation. However, the variance in interpretations and the eclectic range of objects subsumed under connotation render the term semantically nebulous, lacking the critical attributes of scientific precision—clarity and definitiveness. To address this ambiguity, a more nuanced

exploration of the meaning of connotation within the purview of this study is imperative.

V.N. Telia, as noted in the encyclopedic dictionary "Linguistics," defines connotation as the emotional, evaluative, or stylistic undertone of a lexical unit, whether of a common or occasional nature. Telia emphasizes that within connotation, the associative-figurative component serves as the foundation for evaluative qualification. Telia suggests that connotation may be occasional and highlights the close relationship between connotation and evaluation [Языкознание, p. 236]. In contrast, I.M. Kobozeva presents a differing viewpoint by rejecting the idea of connotation being occasional. According to Kobozeva, connotations distinguish themselves from other forms of pragmatic information by referring not to the individual user of the sign, but to the linguistic community as a whole. Additionally, Kobozeva proposes a distinction between connotations and the emotional-evaluative aspects of word meaning that reflect the personal attitudes of the speaker towards the subject [Kobozeva 2000, p. 92].

Building upon these perspectives, we can initially characterize connotation as a cluster of distinctive features of a word that are independent of its denotation. These features do not restrict the word from denoting an object lacking these characteristics but instead dictate its use in a descriptive capacity, enabling it to function as a semantic predicate. It is important to note that the connotative layer of meaning may involve elements of expressiveness and evaluation, although this is not mandatory. For instance, the phrase "*N is married but at heart he is a bachelor*" does not necessarily imply an evaluative judgment, and its expressiveness is debatable. An alternate example, "*His aunt was his real mother.*" may be interpreted as an objective depiction of a situation rather than an expression of the speaker's personal stance on the matter. By introducing a negative portrayal into this connotative usage, such as: "Unfortunately, his aunt, a harsh, selfish woman, was his real mother," the connotations associated with the term "mother" encompass attributes like nurturing, caregiving, and kindness. Characteristics such as blood relation or female gender,

when employed connotatively, may not carry significant weight in the overall message conveyed by the words.

When considering the relationship between connotations and associations, some researchers tend to blend these concepts or even consider them identical. For example, I.M. Kobozeva describes connotations as "(semantic) associations," citing J. Bartiminsky's view of connotations as "the entirety of associations embedded in a society's cultural context." However, it is crucial to differentiate between connotations and associations. Associations can be individual or occasional, varying among different language communities. As previously mentioned, we reject the notion of connotations being individual or sporadic, hence avoiding a deep focus on such associations. Referring to more predictable associations entrenched within a linguistic-cultural community, we emphasize the distinction from connotations [Kobozeva 2000, c. 92].

Connotations are an inherent part of a lexical unit, integrated within the unit itself and confined within its boundaries, while associations are linked externally to the lexical unit by the language community. This differentiation can be illustrated with two examples. For instance, The word "*rose*" in natural language carries connotations of love, beauty, and romance. These associations are inherent to the word itself and are part of its lexical unit. The connotations of "*rose*" are closely tied to the word's meaning and are commonly understood by speakers of the language. Another example would be the term "*Coca-Cola*" which in the somatic cultural code system is externally linked to associations of refreshment, happiness, and Americana by the language community. These associations are not inherent to the word "*Coca-Cola*" itself but have been established through cultural context, marketing efforts, and shared experiences. The name "*Coca-Cola*" evokes these external associations within the cultural code system, illustrating the distinction between connotations and associations in lexical units. Therefore, it is essential to delineate between associations and connotations, although some expected associations may overlap with connotative elements.

In our analysis, we view the connotation of a linguistic element as the non-conceptual distinguishing characteristics attributed to this element, as well as the underlying representation (or a series of representations). We posit that it is feasible, though to a reasonable extent of conventionality, to discuss the non-conceptual distinguishing features of the representation associated with a name, as they are the factors in specific cases that dictate the feasibility or impossibility of assigning a particular object with that name. As an illustration, let's consider the connotations and non-conceptual distinguishing features associated with the name "Tesla" in the context of electric vehicles. The name "*Tesla*" is commonly associated with innovation, sustainability, and cutting-edge technology in the automotive industry. These connotations are part of the lexical unit of the name "Tesla" and contribute to its brand identity and reputation. In the case of electric vehicles, the non-conceptual distinguishing features associated with the name "Tesla" may include characteristics such as long-range battery capabilities, autonomous driving technology, and sleek design aesthetics. These features are not explicitly stated in the name itself but are deeply connected to the representation of the brand and its products. The connotations and underlying representations associated with the name "Tesla" play a significant role in determining the appropriateness of assigning it to a specific object within the domain of electric vehicles.

If we adopt the definition above, then the significance of the elements within the cultural code that concerns us is connotative, contrasting with what we term as the "natural language" meaning in our examination, which could be termed denotative in a conditional sense. It appears that we are encountering a distinct type of connotative meaning in this scenario; it would be appropriate to label it as symbolic in a manner akin to the interpretation put forth by O.G. Pestova: "By symbolic meaning, we refer to the sort of meaning conventionally established through the mechanisms of metaphorization and metonymization, wherein the name of a specific object acts as a signifier for an abstract meaning."

This discussion compels us to reflect on the essence of symbolic meaning, thus presenting us with the issue of the symbol itself. This predicament can be traced back

to ancient times, originating from the Pythagoreans through Plato and the medieval scholastics. However, our objective does not involve providing even a brief overview of the historical backdrop of the matter or attempting to categorize existing viewpoints. Within linguistics, the matter of the symbol is intricately intertwined with the dilemma of the linguistic sign. Some scholars employ the terms "symbol" and "sign" interchangeably, while others advocate for a clear differentiation between these concepts: "A symbol underscores the relationship of analogy between the signified and the signifier and their inadequacy. In contrast, a sign features a relationship between the components that is unmotivated and fitting (there is no analogy between the term 'bull' and the image of a bull, as the corresponding signifier exhausts it entirely)."

In our distinction between the notions of sign and symbol, we follow the perspective of A.F. Losev, who highlighted: "A symbol is an elaborate sign, while a sign can also be seen as a nascent symbol, its incipient form. For a rudimentary and basic grasp of the relationship between the meaning of an entity and the entity itself, the term 'symbol' may be deemed dispensable. A symbol necessitates not only a representation but also a creative model. A symbol not only designates an infinite multitude of individuals, but it also signifies the principle of their origination." [Losev, p. 133-134]. As noted by Yu.M. Lotman, the symbol is capable of "retaining extensive and profound texts in a condensed format." [Lotman, p. 148]

CONCLUSION

It is worth noting that the structure of the semantic field formed by the meanings of second-level signs, to which we attribute units of cultural codes, is isomorphic to the structure of semantic fields in natural language, where the same words function as first-level signs. Just like in natural language, polysemous and monosemous terms can be distinguished within cultural codes. Certain units of a cultural code might operate as pragmatic equivalents in specific contexts, while in others, they may be juxtaposed, allowing for the discussion of synonymy and antonymy within these units.

In conclusion, it is reiterated that names belonging to the somatic code of culture possess, in addition to their common language meaning, a distinct symbolic significance as signs of a secondary semiotic system. Importantly, this significance is not context-dependent but rather assigned to the corresponding linguistic unit. Traditional dictionaries typically do not elucidate these meanings, overlooking them, necessitating the introduction of such descriptions into lexicographical practice as a pertinent and relevant endeavor.

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