

AXIONOMEN CULTURE AS A SOCIAL VALUE: THEORETICAL ASPECT

Тетяна Сорока

к. філол.н., доцент кафедри англійської мови та перекладу
Ізмаїльський державний гуманітарний університет (Україна)

1. Problem statement

There are hundreds of definitions of culture. It is difficult to define because it is a large and inclusive axionomen qualified as determined linguistic unit denoting spiritual value. It encompasses what humans create to express values, attitudes, and norms. A culture is not usually discussed by the members who share it. Edward Hall, a key researcher into cultures, wrote «Culture is those deep, common, unstated experiences which members of a given culture share, which they communicate without knowing, and which form the backdrop against which all other events are judged» [2, p. 19].

2. Critical overview

Culture is the property of a community of people, not simply a characteristic of individuals. Societies are programmed by culture and that programming comes from similar life experiences and similar interpretations of what those experiences mean. If culture is mental programming, it is also a mental map of reality [6]. It tells us from early age what matters, what to prefer, what to avoid, what to do and also what ought to be. It gives us assumptions about the ideal beyond what individuals may experience. It helps us in setting priorities. It establishes codes for behaviour and provides justification and legitimization for this behaviour. From among the many definitions, here is the definition this article will use: «Culture is the coherent, learned, shared view of a group of people about life's concerns that ranks what is important, furnishes attitudes about what things are appropriate, and dictates behavior» [1, p. 31].

3. Purpose of investigation

The purpose of the article is to clarify all the valuable characteristics of culture mentioned in the definition: culture is coherent; culture is learned; culture is the view of a group of people; culture ranks what is important; culture furnishes attitudes.

4. Research course

4.1. Culture is coherent

Each culture, past or present, is coherent and complete within itself – an entire view of the universe. The pioneer researcher into the study of cultures, Edward Tylor,

said in 1871 that culture is «the outward expression of a unifying and consistent vision brought by a particular community to its confrontation with such core issues as the origins of the cosmos, the harsh unpredictability of the natural environment, the nature of society and humankind's place in the order of things [7, p. 31].

That different groups of human beings at different times in history could develop different visions is both a cause for wonder, and as we'll see, a cause of misunderstanding. The incredible richness of the variety of cultures fascinates historians, anthropologists, travelers, and nearly everybody. It makes all our lives to glimpse and even claim a bit of this treasure of human achievement. The completeness of cultures also means members looking out from their own seamless view of the universe probably do not see anything lacking in their «unifying and consistent vision». Why do we need to know another culture? How can we see the possibility of something existing where we have always seen nothing? The response to these questions first recognizes that culture determines practices which are not neutral or value-free. Neither are communication practices. We need to understand the cultural values we transmit while interacting someone from another culture, as well as the other person's cultural values. We also need to recognize the likelihood that there will be gaps in comprehension – holes instead of connections – in one's interaction.

Understanding another culture is a legitimate concern of interlingual communication. More than that, it is essential. Those who make the effort to understand another culture gain knowledge about how to behave in that culture. Or put it another way: if we know what people value and understand their attitudes, we won't unintentionally do something that offends and diminishes our chances for career success. According to Hendrick Serrie «relatively few people understand that mastering appropriate behaviour takes precedence over mastering the language» [5, p. 55].

4.2. Culture is learned

Culture is not something we are born with, but rather it is learned. This is not to say people can talk objectively about their own culture. Much of what is learned about one's own culture is stored in mental categories that are recalled only when they are challenged by something different. We all have to be taught our culture. If culture is learned, then it is also learnable. That means nobody has to remain for a lifetime locked inside only one culture. If we want to understand other cultures, we can learn them – not just learn about them, but actually get inside them and act according to what is expected in them. Many people have learned more than one culture and move comfortably within them.

4.3. Culture is the view of a group of people

Culture is shared by a society. Members of the society agree about the meanings of things and about the *why*. Along with everyone from whom they have learned their culture – older family members, teachers, spiritual leaders, peers, and representatives of legal, political, and educational institutions – they have interpreted life experiences in ways that validate their own culture's views. Therefore, since they have little doubt about that validity, they all share the view that their interpretations are correct. They agree about what the important things are that truly merit respect. Members of a society probably agree without having to say so that something is necessary and important. Groups are motivated by common views, and these views are a dynamic force in enabling groups to achieve societal goals – protecting economic resources from unscrupulous outsiders, for example.

People in a given culture share symbols of that culture. The most obvious set of symbols is language. Culture and language are intertwined and are shaping each other. It is impossible to separate the two ones. Language is not neutral codes and grammatical rules. Each time a person selects words, forms, sentences, and sends a message, either oral or written; he or she also makes cultural choices. It goes without sayings that language helps in communicating with people from different backgrounds. However, someone may be less aware that cultural literacy is necessary in order to understand the language being used. If the people select language without being aware of the cultural implications, they may at best not communicate well and at worst send the wrong message.

Communication systems such as language and nonverbal communication are products of culture. They are also tools intricately bound up in the processes of culture itself: Language is related to thought processes and to mental learning processes. Linguists like Edward Sapir and Benjamin Lee Whorf have connected how we know something and how we think about something with language. So interconnected are communication and culture that some scholars have been led to use them interchangeably. Yet language is the tool we most often use to describe culture, which suggests they are indeed separate phenomena. Language is clearly inadequate to help us understand culture, especially our own. Language puts limits on expressing certain qualities or concepts with a single word, or the order in which we present thoughts. When language is turned back upon itself and communication is the object of its inquiry as well as the means, then at least understanding communication can help us to understand culture.

One tool for examining the culture windows is the approach to cultures described by Edward Hall, distinguishing among cultures on the basis of the role of context in communication [3, p. 85–128]. High-context cultures rely on the context, either the actual physical environment of communication or an internalized social context or both, to convey a large part or even all of the message's meaning. In cultures in which context is implicitly referred to in communication, the messages themselves can be elliptical, indirect, and allusive. In cultures in which context is not assumed to be understood, messages are explicit, direct, and completely encoded in words. This describes low-context cultures, in which meaning is trusted almost entirely to words.

Edward Hall drew a continuum reaching from the extreme of low-context cultures to the opposite extreme of high-context cultures, and plotted national cultures along the continuum. He identified German as a very low-context culture, in which messages are spelled out fully, clearly, and precisely. He identified Japan as a high-context culture, where messages are multilevel and implicit. He put the United States on the low-context side of middle. High-context cultures, in which the context of the message is well understood by both sender and receiver, use the context to communicate the message.

Members of low-context cultures put their thoughts into words. They tend to think if thoughts are not in words, then the thoughts will not be understood correctly or completely. When messages are in explicit words, the other side can act upon them. But high-context cultures have less tendency to trust words to communicate. They rely on context to help clarify and complete the message.

4.4. Culture ranks what is important

In other words, cultures teach values or priorities. In distinguishing between attitudes and values, George A. Borden explains that values «provide us with standards of competence and of morality, guiding or determining attitudes, behaviour, judgments, comparisons of self and others, rationalizations and justifications, exhortative attempts to influence others, impression management and self-presentations. Thus defined, values are moreover fewer in number than attitudes, are conceptions that transcend specific attitude objects and situations, are determinants of attitudes as well as behaviour, are dynamically closer to needs, and are more central to that core of the person that we identify as the self» [4, p. 98].

Values underlie attitudes. They also shape beliefs. They enable us to evaluate what matters to us or to apply standards to our attitudes and beliefs. In order to communicate about things in another culture, it is necessary to understand the values that operate in that culture. Because values tell us how to weigh the worth of something, they indicate a

relative hierarchy. We can talk about values as cultural priorities. Within a culture, values may be of greater or lesser importance. For example, a culture may put a high priority on honesty a low priority on making a minimal effort. Priorities vary from culture to culture.

4.5. Culture furnishes attitudes

An attitude is learned, and it is a tendency to respond the same way to the same object or situation or idea. Attitudes are feelings about things, based on values. Attitudes can change, although change can be difficult. Attitudes are based on beliefs as well as values. Beliefs are convictions or certainties based on subjective and often personal ideas rather than on proof or fact. Belief systems or religions are powerful sources of values and attitudes in cultures.

One of the inevitable experiences of immersion in a new and unfamiliar culture is culture shock [1, p. 12–13]. It happens to everybody. The term *culture shock* is not quite accurate because it refers to a range of responses that take place over time. It isn't a single jolt. Culture shock is the sense of dislocation along with the problems, psychological and even physical, that result from the stress of trying to make the hundreds of adjustments necessary for living in a foreign culture.

The first stage of experiencing a new culture is usually **euphoria**. Everything about the exciting new adventure is wonderful. This stage generally lasts no longer than two weeks, and some people skip it altogether. Travelers sometimes go home before they have progressed to the next stage.

The second stage is usually a downturn as **disillusionment** and **frustration** arise. This is usually the stage people refer to when they use the term *culture shock*. It is a sense of dislocation that results from finding out those inadequacies exist in our understanding, our mental road map, for navigating in this new culture. We don't know what we don't know. Finding out what we don't know is exhausting, even when it is also exciting. Inevitably there are disappointments; inevitably we make mistakes. When the adjustment to a new culture means an upward change in status, people feel good about the new culture longer. When the adjustment means a downward change in status, people feel unhappy more quickly. Most sojourners experience psychological symptoms of culture shock. Some people find themselves becoming depressed. They may experience long periods of home-sickness. Some are very lonely, and they may be involved in relationships that they that they wouldn't form if they were in their own culture. Nearly all sojourners and temporary residents in a new culture experience dissatisfaction with the way things are. Things that formerly seemed acceptable become irritations. Sojourners can become aggressive and exhibit unpleasant behavior that they would not

use at home. They may get angry easily and express hostility and suspicion towards members of their host culture. Frequently culture shock shows itself when sojourners believe native members of the culture are trying to take advantage of them – to overcharge them, for example – because they are foreign. Physical symptoms of distress also can result from this stage of culture shock. They include aches and pains in limbs, headaches, chronic fatigue and lack of energy, loss of appetite, inability to get a good night's sleep, stomach upsets, and frequent colds or flu. This stage can last longer than the first euphoric stage – perhaps months.

The third stage is **adjustment**. As the expatriate sees both sides and learns more about how the other culture works, he or she is able to cooperate more effectively with members of the host culture. Some successes may occur, and solutions may be found for the problems that seemed so unreasonable and intractable in stage two. At this stage business can probably be conducted successfully.

The fourth stage, **integration**, occurs when the expatriate becomes fluent enough in the other culture to move easily within it and not be thrown by the different attitudes, beliefs, and values and by the behaviours they generate. Often linguistic fluency accompanies this stage. At this stage the expatriate is able to identify with the host culture. Most people who work in another culture, regardless of the length of the stay, experience all four stages of culture shock. Furthermore, the longer one stays, the more cycles one goes through; the fourth stage, in which one feels comfortable in the new culture, leads to another euphoric stage, followed by frustration and disappointment, followed by adjustment, and so on.

5. Concluding remarks

All the presented issues stress that culture as a large and inclusive concept involves learned and shared behaviours, norms, values, and material objects. Among different scientific characteristics of culture it is defined as coherent, learned, representing the view of a group of people and what is important. Culture teaches values or social priorities. It can furnish attitudes which are based on beliefs as well as values. Edward Hall described the approach to examine high-context cultures and low-context cultures distinguishing them on the basis of the role of context in communication. Cross-cultural immersion is accompanied by a culture shock symptoms of which (euphoria; disillusionment and frustration; adjustment; integration) are normal and to be expected in such experiences.

6. Further research

The prospect of research is to use the results of theoretical considerations concerning culture as a social value for fundamental studies of lexico-semantic groupings of English philosophical, world outlook, scientific, social, political, moral, religious, legal and aesthetic axionomens.

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FONCTIONS PRAGMATIQUES DES MOYENS NON-VERBAUX ET PARAVERBAUX (COMMERCIAUX) DANS LES TEXTES PUBLICITAIRE

Ludmila Starodedova

maître de conférence

Université d'État Humanitaire d'Izmaïl, Ukraine

Les moyens linguistiques (ou verbaux) constituent le fondement de toute communication. Pourtant on ne peut pas sous-estimer d'autres moyens qui assurent son succès. Dans la communication publicitaire, les moyens non-verbaux essentiels sont: la ponctuation, les illustrations, les caractères typographiques et la couleur. Ces composants de