Research article / Научная статья

Semiotic Approach in Psycholinguistics

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Abstract. The study is devoted to psycholinguistics as one of the angles of the study of consciousness. The relevance of the study is due to the fact that psycholinguistics has not yet succeeded in constructing a valid ontological picture defining the specific "reality" of a given science, and finding a place for it in the scientific picture of the world. If we take into account the spatial structure of the sign, then we can assume the presence of at least three points of view on semiotics as a subject of study of the sign organization of consciousness. These are linguistic semiotics, philosophical semiotics and psychological-hermeneutical semiotics. The novelty of the study lies in the introduction of psycholinguistics into the intersubject communicative space of disciplines that study consciousness in order to highlight its subject-methodological features. The symbolic nature of consciousness makes it possible to consider semiotics not only as a scientific subject of study, but also as a method of organizing and transferring experience. As a result of the analysis of the problem, the statement can be proposed that psycholinguistics methodically explores understanding as an accompanying function of text creation. In culture, relations between people are reified, and this reification is semiotic. In the psyche, these relationships are psycholinguistic. The socio-cultural encounter of these relationships occurs at the metacognition level.

Keywords: sign, consciousness, psycholinguistics, text, evidential paradigm, understanding, meta-cognition

Семиотический подход в психолингвистике

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Аннотация. Исследование посвящено психолингвистике как одному из ракурсов изучения сознания. Актуальность исследования обусловлена тем, что психолингвистике до сих пор не удалось построить специальную онтологическую картину, задающую особую «действительность» данной науки, и найти ей место в научной картине мира. Если принять во внимание пространственную структуру знака, то можно предположить наличие, по крайней мере, трех точек зрения на семиотику как предмет изучения знаковой организации сознания. Это лингвистическая семиотика, философская семиотика и психолого-герменевтическая семиотика. Новизна исследования состоит во введении психолингвистики в межпредметное коммуникативное пространство дисциплин, изучающих сознание, с целью высвечивания ее предметно-методических особенностей. Знаковая природа сознания позволяет рассмотреть семиотику не только как научный предмет изучения, но и как метод организации и передачи опыта. Результатом анализа проблемы может быть предложено утверждение, что психолингвистика в методическом плане исследует понимание как сопровождающую функцию творения текста. В культуре отношения между людьми овеществляются, и это овеществление семиотично. В психике эти отношения психолингвистичны. Социокультурная встреча этих взаимоотношений происходит на уровне метасознания.

Ключевые слова: знак, сознание, семиотика, психолингвистика, текст, уликовая парадигма, понимание, метасознание

Introduction

According to the dictionary definition semiotics is a branch of science that investigates the qualities of signs and systems of signs. It's a scientific discipline that explores communicative systems and the signs constituting them [1]. Signs are ubiquitous, present in various areas of our life: monetary signs (money), astrological signs (Zodiac), graphical punctuation signs, signs of mathematical operations as addition, subtraction, etc., musical signs (notes), military insignia, the signs on the roads, commercial brands, the signs pertaining to human behaviour and relations like appreciation and respect, consent or disagreement, etiquette. Everything around can be treated as a sign [2]. But is there anything that is not a sign? Yes, that is only human consciousness. It generates signs. Consequently, it should

be acknowledged that the sign is the material aspect of consciousness ("the curse of matter" as K. Marx claimed, is primarily dependent on the spirit). Consciousness as a human quality also has a sign form presenting itself to an individual as such). Hence, it is co-knowledge. Moreover, the entire objective world, including cultural human practice can be considered the content of consciousness, therefore a sign. Does it mean then that signs are outside scientific knowledge taking into account the stringent criteria of the classical scientific paradigm?

Semiotic Approach

It's implied or expressed that the status of a science in a classical paradigm depends on the object of research, methods and techniques of investigation, a specific language of description [3]. Semiotics since its emergence at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries deviates from the accepted paradigm of knowledge, which is why its scientific status isn't universally acknowledged.

Primarily, semiotics hasn't yet developed its own research method or methods, if by method we mean a set of operations which allow a theoretical or practical grasp of reality. It is more accurate to say that it embraces any method in principle, without considering any connection between method and worldview. Next, semiotics virtually denies the distinction between the object of description and the language of description, treating both as two isomorphic languages. This is perhaps the only case in culture where synchronicity (the state of an object at the moment of its use in communication) wholly explains its diachronicity (the historical development of an object over time).

If semiotics is not an outlook or a method, since it is addressed by people of various views of the world, from idealist theologians to materialist atheists, it absorbs all existing methods of humanities (sociological, psychoanalytic, linguistic, logical, etc.) or, conversely, becomes one component of each method in its own right. If semiotics is not a viewpoint or a set of opinions of particular semioticians, because the special construction of the semiotic apparatus and the metalinguistic nature of representation prevent these opinions from fully manifesting their subjective nature, but inflict a number of rules-restrictions on it. It can be assumed that the subject of semiotics is not precisely delineated or misnamed. It is not only "a way of human existence inside the language it creates", but also outside it — "as soon as the illocutionary act ceases to be a pure action and moves into the sphere of reflexion, we objectively get into the space of semiotics" [4. P. 47]. This means that it is a science of human consciousness. Only consciousness can be both "outside" and "inside" the entity it denotes, since it has no place of its own (according to Kant, the metaphysical problem of the place of the soul is not only unsolvable, but also internally contradictory). Human consciousness is written in the language of meanings, semiotics tries to describe the laws of meaning-making by seeking them out in diverse constellations of signs.

One of the classics of semiotic studies, Charles William Morris, included semiotics in the encyclopedia of knowledge back in 1946. Recognizing that the salient feature of human intelligence is generation of signs, Ch. Morris claimed that semiotics is designed to solve the problem of unifying sciences [5].

The semiotic approach allows the study of complex processes and structures as sign forms of human consciousness. For the humanities, this approach is similar to the role of mathematics in the subjects of the natural science cycle. The symbolic nature of consciousness allows us to consider semiotics not so much as a scientific subject of study, but as a method of organizing and transferring experience [6]. Thus, Carlo Ginzburg's evidential paradigm highlights this very aspect of human consciousness. Let us believe the researcher who claims that man has been a hunter for thousands of years: "In the course of countless chases he learned to reconstruct the shapes and movements of his invisible prey from tracks on the ground, broken branches, excrement, tufts of hair, entangled feathers, stagnating odors. He learned to sniff out, record, interpret, and classify such infinitesimal traces as trails of spittle. He learned how to execute complex mental operations with lightning speed, in the depth of a forest or in a prairie with its hidden dangers. This rich storehouse of knowledge has been passed down by hunters over the generations. <…> This knowledge is characterized by the ability to construct from apparently insignificant experimental data a complex reality that could not be experienced directly. Also, the data is always arranged by the observer in such a way as to produce a narrative sequence, which could be expressed most simply as "someone passed this way." Perhaps the actual idea of narration (as distinct from charms, exorcisms, or invocation) may have originated in a hunting society, relating the experience of deciphering tracks. This obviously undemonstrable hypothesis nevertheless seems to be reinforced by the fact that the rhetorical figures on which the language of venatic deduction still rests today – the part in relation to the whole, the effect in relation to the cause — are traceable to the narrative axis of metonymy, with the rigorous exclusion of metaphor. <…> Consequently, we can speak of a presumptive or divinatory paradigm, directed, depending on the forms of knowledge, towards the past, present, or future. For the future, there was divination in a strict sense; for the past, the present, and the future, there was medical semiotics in its twofold aspect, diagnostic and prognostic; for the past, there was jurisprudence. But behind this presumptive or divinatory paradigm we perceive what may be the oldest act in the intellectual history of the human race: the hunter squatting on the ground, studying the tracks of his quarry" [7. P. 102–104].

Thus, in the history of mankind, a set of disciplines arose based on deciphering the signs of various kinds, from symptoms to written signs. The body, language and history of human beings were for the first time subjected to an unprejudiced analysis which in principle ruled out divine intervention. Even today, we live with the effects of this decisive shift that defined the culture of the polis. A paramount role in this shift was played by a paradigm called the semiotic or evidence-based

paradigm. Doctors, historians, politicians, potters, carpenters, sailors, hunters, fishermen, and women were just a few of the social categories that served as the vast field of presumptive knowledge in the eyes of the Greeks.

These are disciplines that basically operate with qualities, not quantities; having as their object individual cases, situations and documents just as individual phenomena and that is why they arrive at results that carry an irreducible element of chance.

To connect to the semiotic paradigm, the object of study should be first delineated because the sign has three components: name — denotatum — meaning. True, there can be signs without a name (null sign), without a denotatum (empty sign) and without meaning (bare sign). But the significance of the sign — its place in the system of other signs — makes up for this absence [8]. Then determine the vector (aspect) of semiosis.

It was Ch. Morris who identified three dimensions of semiosis: syntactics, which characterizes the relationship of one sign to another or others, semantics, which characterizes the relationship of a sign to a meaning, and pragmatics, which characterizes the relationship of a sign to a user (interpreter) [9].

And, finally, those ones determine the issue of the units of analysis, which contain, like a molecule, all the main properties of the sense produced. Every semiotic system is characterized by:
1)   an operational method;
2)   the scope;
3)   the nature and number of signs;
4)   the type of operation.

An operational method is the way through which the system acts, namely that sensation (sight, hearing, taste, etc.) through which it is perceived.

Scope is an area where the system is mandatory, recognized, and influences behavior.

The nature and number of signs are derived from the above conditions.

The type of operation is the relation that connects signs and imparts them a differentiating

(distinctive) function.

Only after this, by analogy with other sciences, three classes of methods can be distinguished in semiotics:
• Theoretical, where the subject is related with the mental pattern of the object (more precisely, the subject of study). These involve linguistic methods of analyzing sign systems.
• Empirical, by which the external real correlation of the subject and the object of the investigation is performed. For example, the construction of languages.
• Interpretations and descriptions, by which the subject is "externally" linked up with the symbolic presentation of the object (graphs, tables, diagrams, texts).

Using of theoretical methods results in knowledge about the object in natural-linguistic, sign-symbolic or spatial-schematic forms. Empirical methods give us data

that fix the state of the object by readings from instruments, conditions of the subject, computer memory, activity effects, etc. Latterly, interpretive-descriptive methods are the "assembly point" for the outcome of the implementation of theoretical and experimental methods and the point of their interacting.

The data of an empirical study, as the first option, are initially exposed to elaboration and proffering complying with the demands on the results of the theory, pattern, and the inductive hypothesis underlying the research. As another option, the data under study can be viewed in terms of contesting conceptions for consistency with the hypothesis results.

The products of interpretation are fact, empirical dependence and, ultimately, substantiation or rejection of the hypothesis [10].

According to Niels Bohr's principle of complementarity, mutually exclusive, additional classes of concepts are needed to reproduce an integral phenomenon in a sign system. For the sign itself, the principle is unalterable. Representing consciousness in communication, the sign carries with it the properties of consciousness, its discrete-continuous nature. This is a four-dimensional space-time existence (three coordinates of space and one coordinate of time), and non-redundancy in the coexistence of sign systems, and double signifying: an object and knowledge about it, and the ability to "enter" another sign, expanding its meaning. Herewith follows one of the main problems of semiotics — the allocation of units for the analysis of sign systems and their hierarchy in the structure of consciousness.

According to U. Eco, "the most and the least that semiology is capable of (we are talking about research, the possibility of which is still looming), is to recognize in the way of articulating the signifier certain laws corresponding to *constant mechanisms of thinking*, unchanged for all cultures and civilizations, and, therefore, to assume — as a hypothesis — that, ultimately, each message contains the most imperative indication of how it should be read, due to the immutability of the mechanisms of articulation, schemes of generating statements, from which no one has ever been able to free themselves. The semiotic concept of *constancy of communication* rests on this utopian concept of *immutability of the human mind*. But these general research stances should not divert attention from another related task: to constantly monitor the changes in the forms of communication, the restructuring of codes, the birth of ideologies" [11. P. 114].

Text in Psycholinguistics

If we take into account the spatial structure of the sign, we can assume the presence of at least three points of view on semiotics as a subject of study of the sign organization of consciousness. While F. de Saussure and Charles Peirce stood at the origins of the first two semiotics, the third one was mainly developed by Russian scientists: G.G. Shpet, L.S. Vygotsky, M.M. Bakhtin, V.Ya. Propp, the school of "Russian formalists", S.M. Eisenstein and others. In this sense, psycholinguistics

can also be viewed as a section of pragmatics, if we stand on the activity oriented position: "The subject of psycholinguistics is the relationship of the personality to the structure and functions of speech activity, on the one hand, and language as the main human world image "shaping factor", on the other" [12. P. 19].

The study of the place and role of sign systems in human life is becoming a very urgent task for modern humanities, since signs, symbols and their systems act as material carriers of human modes of life and transmission of specifically human abilities over generations. It is not by chance that Ernst Cassirer spoke of man as a "symbolic animal" [13], and M.M. Bakhtin suggested calling "symbolology" the method of the humanities [14].

Being interested in the relationship between languages and mental processes, psycholinguistics falls under the jurisdiction of the semiotic consciousness-working paradigm [15].

In the post-nonclassical scholarly paradigm, consciousness is not considered an object, it cannot be treated as such in the classical cognitive stratagem of subject-object relations. The deficiency of the notion that self-consciousness is "apparent", and it is the most essential and principal foundation of knowledge (cogito ergo sum), where the object of knowledge and the means of cognition converge, have become evident. For consciousness per se (rather than its comprehension) cannot be sustained by us in reality, alternatively, it cannot be a life experience for us, and consequently it cannot be an item of positive knowledge. It is not just that it cannot be the object of one's own background, despite the fact that it is also significant, but it cannot be an object for us. We believe that we deal with consciousness, that we are involved in cognizance of consciousness particularly as it is inconceivable to define consciousness, to deal with consciousness as it is, and not with its understanding. Accordingly, new terms and notions should be presented, that should be reffered not to consciousness as an object of study, but to "dealings" with it, and hence these terms and concepts will be fixed as assets of the very work with consciousness itself.

Understanding is a prerequisite for working with consciousness (not "work" of consciousness", but "work with consciousness"), which is a very important basis of cognition.

"Here a special role is played by some internal negative ability, which is expressed in a kind of "struggle with consciousness". The struggle with consciousness comes from the desire of a person to ensure that consciousness ceases to be something spontaneous and self-acting. Consciousness becomes cognition, and at this time (the word "time" here has no physical meaning) ceases to be consciousness, and, as it were, becomes meta-consciousness — and then we will conventionally call the terms and statements of this latter meta-theory. And what inevitably pushes us towards the metatheory of consciousness is the need to struggle with consciousness. The task is, firstly, to determine the conditions in which the problem of the struggle with consciousness arises and, secondly, to reveal this struggle with consciousness as being itself a source of knowledge. The struggle with consciousness

follows from the very way of existence of an individual person as a conscious being and is a manifestation of this way, in this sense it is a pragmatic problem, because a person encounters it, no matter what activity he is engaged in. A person solves this problem as a problem of his own way of existence" [16. P. 28].

In metatheory, consciousness is not just a single mental process, but there is a level at which all distinct mental operations are consolidated (including other levels, such as the unconscious), and which are no longer themselves here because at such a level they relate to consciousness. That's why every cognitive operation can be looked at from both the conscious and the object sides. Consideration of the second aspect of the consciousness side implies a synthesis of the knowledge of the disciplines studying it.

Interdisciplinary Approach

A significant characteristics of any interdisciplinary research is its problem orientation, leading to the emergence of fundamentally new knowledge at the junction of individual, specified disciplines. Moreover, the disciplines themselves, after such integration, do not cease to exist, but are enriched with new principles of research. Thus, if hermeneutics has emerged as a protective mechanism for preservation and transmission of meanings, since the latter are sometimes subjective and can be distorted in the process of translation, storage, or reproduction. "Hermeneutics as an activity ultimately has practical goals: to understand, to have understood, to become understanding (that is, to become smarter), to help others to become understanding (smart), to improve mutual understanding between people and nations, to explain the foundations of one's own or someone else's understanding (to interpret) and help others interpret something, to get rid of a deaf misunderstanding and help others in this, more broadly — to enrich the spiritual life of an individual and a clan, making people smarter, better and cleaner" [17].

Then psycholinguistics picked up the tradition of the rhetorical canon to create a text as a speech product that affects another person. It was psycholinguistics that was interested in the process of not only perception, but also generation of a speech utterance, more broadly, a text. Here it moved further, presenting the stages of text generation in the form of separate sense loci. Thus combining the rhetorical tradition with hermeneutic [18]. The range of problems discussed in psycholinguistics includes the unification of the tasks of understanding and interpreting a text, since only in a dialogue with another (sometimes of a higher status — initiated into the secrets of interpretation), encountering other senses, the identity of truth can be established. In its methodological aspect psycholinguistics explores understanding as an accompanying function of text creation [19].

Ontology, material, structure, objectives, methods and procedures suggest that disciplines such as psycholinguistics, semiotics and hermeneutics are united

into a single academic complex that describes the life of consciousness [20]. Understanding, on the other hand, links cognition, communication and the expansion of consciousness into a single knot. Problems and material, structure and ontology, methods and procedures suggest that disciplines such as psycholinguistics, semiotics and hermeneutics are united into a single academic complex that describes the life of consciousness. On the other hand, understanding links cognition, communication and the expansion of consciousness into a single knot. As a semantic whole (and the sense cannot be divided into components, as this mental unit is not discrete, like any function of the content of a sign), consciousness should be considered a text. So, texts, as more stable and constrained formations, tend to move from one context to another, as is usually the case with relatively durable works of art: moving to another cultural context, they behave like an informant, moved to a new communicative situation — they actualize previously hidden aspects of their coding system. This "recoding of oneself" in accordance with the situation reveals the analogy between the sign behavior of a person and a text. Thus, the text, on the one hand, likened to the cultural macrocosm, becomes more significant than itself and acquires the features of a cultural model, and on the other hand, it tends to implement independent conduct, assimilating to an autonomous personality" [21. P. 161].

Conclusion

Signs, symbols, texts act as existential transporters of the human way of life and the intergenerational transmission of specifically human abilities, consciousness integrating these abilities. The semiotic approach confronts different positions, forming a single interdisciplinary communicative space for solving complex object problems. In recent decades, philosophers, psychologists, linguists, and cultural studies experts have become increasingly interested in the emerging interdisciplinary fields of knowledge covering the issues of common for them cultural phenomena of sign, sense, symbol, meaning, word, text, interpretation, understanding, etc. Psycholinguistics, psychosemiotics and psychohermeneutics formed on the basis of this interest as new branches of humanitarian knowledge introduce the factor of consciousness and ways of its functioning into the sciences of sign systems, into the problem of understanding texts expressed in different languages, into the issues of interpreting reality and constructing a world picture. Psycholinguistics, psychosemiotics and psychohermeneutics, formed on the basis of this interest, as novel disciplines of humanitarian studies, bring up the factor of consciousness and its operating modes into semiotics, the abilities of understanding texts represented in different languages, into the issues of interpreting reality and constructing a world view. Nonetheless, each of these disciplines has its own subject in the constructed object of study. A semiotician is confronted with the sense structure of consciousness as the object of study. This

framework is set not only by language, but also by many other sign systems, in the broader sense — by culture as an iconic formation. Semiotics, as a designing field of study, endeavors to create a language for communicative interaction in a heterogeneous cultural environment of signs.

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