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CROSS-CULTURAL COMMUNICATION: CHALLENGES AND PROSPECTS

The rapid changes in the social and technological contexts of human life require deep understanding of not only political, economic, legal processes but also linguacultural ones taking place in our society, in cross-cultural communication in particular. In recent decades, the changes in the social and technological contexts led to the formation of a certain linguistic culture. Under linguistic culture I understand a wide range of linguistic phenomena from the linguistic policy of the state to individuals' speech behaviour being in accordance with the worked out by the society ideas of speech culture. The linguistic culture system also includes such phenomena as linguistic planning, multilingualism and plurilingualism in public life and education, preservation of the nation's language identity, linguistic landscape, dynamics and forms of linguistic and cultural contacts and, finally, culture of translation and linguadidactics. Each of the above mentioned components of linguistic culture de-

serves detailed examination. I'll dwell on the two last mentioned elements of the linguistic culture system being of particular relevance both to the cross-cultural dialogue and cross-cultural conflicts, the basis of which is failure to understand the other.

The two main factors should be mentioned among many others leading to changes and deformation of the linguistic culture system in the today's world, to wit, digitalization of linguistic culture and globalization, presuming not only internationalization of economic and financial systems but also inclusion into the cross-cultural dialogue of various strata of the society. If one looks closely, it's possible to see that both factors are interconnected.

It's well known that globalization affects culture of every nation both positively and negatively: on the one hand, this is the way to knowing cultural diversity, deeper understanding of "different" and "alien", formation of cultural tolerance, but on the other hand, this is a threat to the national and cultural individuality and uniqueness, the way to cultural simplification and spiritual impoverishment.

The non-controlled digitalization of the cross-cultural communication processes may also lead to cultural simplification. Already today, we are witnessing artificial intelligence experts sounding the alarm and calling to stop teaching systems in order to have an opportunity to develop and introduce security algorithms. Misgivings and fears that artificial intelligence may bring as much evil as good are far from ungrounded. Any artificial intelligence reflects ideas and value guidelines of those who developed and taught it. It's difficult to imagine what they may teach the neural network. A well-known example is the chatbot created by Microsoft and taught using the wrong data which started using the foul language in 2015 as a result of this teaching.

The *ChatGPT* example causes concern because some artificial intelligence many times exceeding the possibilities of today's neuronets may appear in future and will strongly influence the human conscience. One cannot exclude the possibility of bots' connecting at some moment and getting

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out of human control. To put it differently, the multi-billion humankind will deal with one artificial intelligence.

Thus, a **new form of the cross-cultural dialogue** will be formed: not a dialogue between cultures of different ethnic groups, different linguistic cultures but a dialogue between artificial intelligence's averaged universal culture and cultures of separate ethnic groups enclosed in their cultural codes. And such a cross-cultural dialogue may become the final stage of cultural variety within the framework of human civilization, after which a stage of cognitive globalization and destruction of all cultural codes may follow.

This futuristic thinking is built mainly on the warning forecasts by artificial intelligence experts. But it is already possible to see some causing concern phenomena deforming the linguistic culture system today in the field of cross-cultural communication, especially cross-language communication provided by translation as well as in the field of mastering foreign languages by the youngest members of our society.

The contemporary period is characterized by humankind's transfer to a new stage of development – the era of digitalization. In our country, digital development surged forward in 2017, in particular thanks to the Executive Order of the President of the Russian Federation dated May 9, 2017, № 203 “On the 2017–2030 Strategy for the Development of an Information Society in the Russian Federation”. Today, as the academician of the Russian Academy of Sciences V. A. Sadovnichy said figuratively, “the digit runs the show” pushing out the analog information “to the sidelines” of the contemporary development of the information society.

Digitalization includes not only human's working with information received on digital carriers but also delegation of some production and other important to the society functions to artificial intelligence, i. e. a higher level of technologies in various kinds of activities.

The importance of digitalization for the society is so high that it brought about talks about the technological revolution Industry 4.0, which in the opinion of Klaus Schwab “entails nothing less than a transformation of humankind” and changes not only what we do and how we do it but also what we ourselves will be.

The era of digitalization is characterized by new challenges making one think about the future of various fields of the human society's life, a whole number of various kinds of professional activities.

They do not bypass the cross-culture communication field either, touching upon not only the conditions, forms and means of communications in the new environment but also formation of plurilingualism as the basis of the cross-cultural dialogue and training, and special personnel intended to provide cross-language communication, first of all, translation and interpretation.

Nowadays, translators and interpreters are trained not only for the linguistic transfer from one language to another but also, to a bigger extent, for cross-cultural communication.

In this connection, four groups of challenges touching upon the following sections of linguistic culture should be reviewed first of all:

- 1) technological;
- 2) socioeconomic;

- 3) ethical;
- 4) linguadidactical.

The digital translation is a kind of translation technology being a system of net interaction of a translator and information and communication means helping to enhance the efficiency of translating and the quality of translator's products. The idea of the “digital translation” is of the historical character and will change as the time goes by, some new content will be added as the character of relations between a human translator and artificial intelligence evolves and develops.

The idea of the “digital translation” presumes systemic interaction of a human translator using advantages of information technologies and artificial intelligence capable not only to perform the functions of a human translator more or less successfully, fully or partly replacing them in some cases of cross-language communication, but also constantly self-train to advance the level of its “machine translation skills”.

The development of digital technologies is called first of all to optimize the work of translators, and it is at least unconstructive to be pessimistic as to the future of the occupation and its being in demand. Really, “technological unemployment” in connection with complete replacement of humans by machines still threatens translators and interpreters only slightly. Sure, the complex algorithms and developments in robotics and artificial intelligence based on the Big Data, allow today to automate many non-standard tasks. But it is impossible to automate actions including complex tasks of perception and comprehension, creative and social intelligence, the solution of which takes place both during interpretation and translation.

The mutual profit of the human and machine relations in this system is evident. On the one hand, the smart machine instantly handling the Big Data, allows the translator to review the maximum possible number of variants for a “certain case” that turned out to be difficult, and make one's choice based on the translator's individual logic. On the other hand, each new variant of translation of a “certain case” offered by the translator and stored in the Big Data cloud in the global information system enriches the system and allows the self-training machine to use it in future for new translation solutions.

The antagonism between the human and the machine is caused, on the one hand, by the constantly growing concern about the future of the human profession of translators and interpreters whom artificial intelligence will try to replace in cross-cultural communication, which is more profitable economically, and, on the other hand, by the criticism addressed to automatic translation programs suggesting variants not capable to compete in various cross-language communications with the variants suggested by the human translator.

The socioeconomic future of the profession of translators and interpreters makes one think today about a whole number of issues: How many translators and interpreters will be required in the environment of the winning digital space? For which fields of activities? With what competences and cognitive capabilities? With what language combinations? What will be the character of the translator's and interpreter's interaction with artificial intelligence? Will the profession of translators and interpreters stay the same as we are used to imagine it now?

The forecasting answers to these futuristic questions are required first of all for determination of the contents of translators' and interpreters' education today, when a new generation of students choosing this occupation has just entered universities. They will have to present their skills and abilities on the labor market in 5–6 years when artificial intelligence reaches such a level of capabilities that is difficult to forecast today.¹

Sure, the automatic translation and not human translation is more profitable for consumers, the amounts and speed increase, and the expenses are minimum. Because of that the question as to the possibility of artificial intelligence pushing humans out of this activity is not exactly correct.

Most likely, it should be examined not as an isolated one but in connection with the ethical component of the issue, to be more exact, the definition of the value of product: will the human society want to entrust the performance of this social function to AI and if yes, in which fields of communications, language combinations, kinds of translation and interpretation, communication situations? Is it possible to allow access to confidential information to artificial intelligence in-built into the global information network being the basis of its advantages in comparison to humans? What will happen if out of malice or as a result of some technological or natural disaster the network stops functioning for some time to a full extent, and cognitive abilities of humans required for translation and interpretation are already lost? Will AI be capable to take not only logical but also "illogical" decisions being the basis of arts?

In this case the main obstacle for automation is the difficulty or impossibility to qualify creative values in such a way as to code them in a program. Besides, human values change as the time flies and differ depending on culture. The arts and creativity, by definition, suppose not only innovations but values as well, and they vary greatly. It follows that many arguments, counter-arguments and disputes about creativity are related to disagreements as to the value itself. Even if we could find out, classify and code our creative values for a computer to work after that and control these algorithms independently, there would have still been disagreements referring to the extent of computer's creativity in its approach to the solution of the issue, the extent of its artfulness. The task becomes even more complex if we try to evaluate a translation.

However, if there are algorithms and robots capable to reproduce certain aspects of interaction of humans in the society, it is still difficult for artificial intelligence to identify natural human emotions in real time and even more difficult to adequately react to them.

Thus, it's possible to suppose that the profession of translator and interpreter will not disappear but change under the impact of the latest digital technologies. The ability to function as the "human – AI" binom, in which the first will be the "master" in relation to the second, the "slave" will be the basis of it. In contrast to a common translation when the translator's function was often compared to the performing actor's function, the translator in the binom with AI is to a bigger extent associated with a film or stage director and orchestra conductor.

¹ See: *Гарбовский Н. К.* «Цифровой перевод»: современные реалии и прогнозы // *Русский язык и культура в зеркале перевода: материалы Междунар. конф. М. : Изд-во МГУ, 2019. С. 65–72.*

The state of affairs in 2020 because of the pandemic made some issues of the humans' interaction with the latest digital technologies more prominent.

First, the forced self-isolation and transfer to remote communication forms vividly demonstrated that methods seriously fall behind technologies, the efficiency of using which proved rather low. Many technological solutions also demonstrated that they are insufficiently worked out, insufficiently reliable and transmission of information is insufficiently stable.

Second, the human society turned out to be more resistant to new forms of remote communication: the wider and more often digital technologies were used in communications, the more active was the wish to "get out" of this state and return to the traditional forms.²

Thus, the survival of the human translation and interpretation as means of the cross-cultural dialogue is provided by social psychology of the human race.

The system of professional translators and interpreters training that has formed in today's Russia borrowed the Soviet system of education in this field as to its main features, inheriting its best traditions.

The Soviet system of professional translators and interpreters training gave fairly positive results: professional competences of Soviet translators and interpreters were highly evaluated by foreign colleagues and employers.

In the early 20th century, the following saying was very popular: "Generals are always getting ready for the previous war." If we continue training translators and interpreters today using the models and ideas of translation and interpretation that formed decades ago and were actual and fairly effective for a long period of time, there is a risk to become like those Generals, and the new generation of translators and interpreters being formed today won't be ready for the impending changes in public life.

In order to train translators and interpreters for providing successful cross-cultural communication in the environment of digitalization of most kinds of human activities, it is required to review the issue of changes in the content of translator' and interpreters' education carefully and thoroughly, presuming not only the effective dialogue of human intelligence (translator or interpreter) and artificial intelligence (automatic translation programs) but also some special features of the cognitive processes in translators' and interpreters' minds under the influence of the already witnessed today new conditions for perception, processing and transmission of information.

It's known that any translation starts from the perception of the original text in the language of the original. The original message in written form supposes reading as a certain cognitive function realized by the translator. In the opinion of some researchers, digital reading loses the linear character and because of that the level of understanding reduces.

The formation of the translator's personality for the digital era requires special attention to restoration of young person's cognitive abilities for attentive reading of texts coming for perception on new carriers.

Digitalization of cross-language communication takes place with globalization as a background. Globalization

² See: *Гарбовский Н. К., Костикова О. И.* Мифы о переводе: от Вавилона до «цифры» // *Русский язык и культура в зеркале перевода: материалы Междунар. конф. М. : Изд-во МГУ, 2020. С. 65–80.*

as a social, economic, cultural and political phenomenon would be impossible without some impersonal communication means capable to provide mutual understanding by all actors in the global world system. The functions of the lingua franca were placed on the English language in its most simplified version. The international status of the English language as the main, practically the only one language for international communications was bound to affect the language policy of the Russian Federation: it has become practically the only foreign language in the system of general education offered for studies – polylingualism practically disappeared from the education process.¹

But it is exactly the combinations with the English language that are most subjected to automation both in everyday and special fields. Gadgets-pocket translators are enough for the “linguistic survival” in the world of alien culture.

The subsidence of polylingualism in recent decades was accompanied by introduction of the communicative method in the process of teaching foreign languages. This method allowed those who had mastered programs to provide themselves a possibility of communicative survival according to the linguistic competences levels and globally focused foreign language textbooks.

In this connection one can clearly see two challenges to linguistic education within the system of general education: 1) the choice of a foreign language for studies; 2) the change of the methods of teaching foreign languages within the system of general education.

In the first case the choice is for polylingualism: the foreign linguistic competences limited by the English language only lose their monopoly as a tool for providing communication. But both today and in the near future the programs for automatic processing of voice messages in a foreign language will be advanced first of all in combination with the English language, thus its studies as means of cross-language communication lose their attractiveness to students. The lack of motivation entails the loss of efficiency of the educational process as a whole. But does that presume re-

fusal from studies of a foreign language as an obligatory subject in the general education program? Far from it. But it is the communicative and not cognitive function of the language as a vector of cultural information that comes to the foreground. In this case polylingualism in the system of teaching foreign languages plays a paramount role. Studies of various foreign languages and acquaintance with various cultures by students (from different but constantly communicating groups) may lead to mutual cultural enrichment, understanding of multidimensionality and diversity of the global world, teaching tolerance of the “different”.

The “cognitive turn” in studying foreign languages within the system of general education presumes a considerable review of the methodical foundations of their teaching. The communicative approach to teaching foreign languages (English in most cases) called to provide “survival” in foreign surroundings in situations of various communicative complexity and built upon fixing speech clichés for typical situations, should gradually cede its place to the method of thoughtful studies of a language as a vector of national culture. This method was created in the Soviet society, closed from the outside world. It allowed Soviet translators and interpreters, diplomats, journalists and many other specialists to “surprise” the world by the perfect command of a foreign language, rich vocabulary, correct speech and deep knowledge of a foreign culture. The communicative approach to teaching languages satisfied the new for its time demands: to develop the skill of elementary command of a foreign language during a short period of time for survival in a foreign language environment. But this task is already being solved by artificial intelligence today.

The “cognitive turn” in studying foreign languages does not lead “forward to the past” and in no way presumes ignoring modern educational technologies. On the contrary, the cognitive approach is based on the achievements of modern linguadidactics and is capable to stimulate creation of innovative effective methods activating motivation of students to mastering foreign languages.²

¹ See: *Гарбовский Н. К.* Четвертая промышленная революция, образование и культура // Педагогика. 2021. Т. 85, № 11. С. 83–92.

² See: *Гарбовский Н. К.* Четвертая промышленная революция...