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phenomenon of time concept

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1.0 Chapter 1 The general notion of time concept

The notion of time takes an important role in the system of outlook dominants. It is clear that everything exists in time. But an abstract character of time makes it rather difficult to describe time completely. In reality we describe such main and distinctive features of time as length, continuance, straight-line relation, dynamism. As a result at the edge of last epoch a new approach to investigate time from different points of view (e.g. philosophic, linguistic, and physical) has been appeared in the modern science. Nowadays we can explain temporal ideas with the help of cognitive approach: how people from different cultures reflect time in the form of mental representations and how these mental representations can be explicated in the language (Russian and English). These types of conceptualized systems are called cognitive structures and cognitive spaces. An individual represents his own cognitive space. Many cognitive spaces can be organized into a cognitive network. It is represented verbally or with help of non-verbal means. These mental cognitive blocks are not isolated, they have a lot of combinations and task is to evaluate and discover the means of the explication in the language.

Time is also strongly connected with changes. The idea of change belongs to famous ancient Greek philosopher Heraclitus. He manifested in his doctrine that things were constantly changing: “The Only Thing That is Constant is Change”. (Мамардашвили, 2004: 98). He also compares our life with a moving river, and a human being never gets in the same situation or in the same condition: “Everything flows, nothing stands still”(Мамардашвили, 2004:99). The example can tell us not only about change, but also about change proceeding in time period.

This quotation illustrates the image of time as a linear. Before the Heraclitus the main idea of time was connected with archaic cyclic time. The further cognitive theory gave us the chance to explicit Heraclitus ideas in the form of cognitive metaphors: “time as landscape”, “time is a moving object”, “time is a valuable resource”. Change and time are correlated with each other. Every change happens in the certain time- in the certain period of our life. And there is always a special time for each change. (Lakoff, 1990)

In this case it is necessary to point out some fundamentals of the Bakhtin’s theory of time in the literature. He used his term “chronotopos” to study special relations of the text components represented by the holistic unity of time and space. (Гачев, 1991:102)

Even Bakhtin accepts the Kant’s point of view, he tries to realize time and space as two forms of the reality. He wants to discover what is happening in this reality where time and space are

connected in the one frame. Time is represented through space, and the space objects are evaluated through time.

The philosophic level of Bakhtin's theory of "Subjective Time game" let us an opportunity to discover two key features of correlation between time and conscious. From his point view, there are two approaches of Time perception: Objective time and Subjective Time. (Гачев, 1991:102)

The last one (Subjective Time) is more interesting for us because it exists on bases of the immanent laws. It may include different temporal vectors, time relevance, etc. These temporal transformations can be valuable for us. In the framework of anthropology time is a basic concept in the system of the human outlook. We deal with time through our personal perception, we accept time, reflect it. Time is represented by the language means in the process of communication. On the other hand, time can have psychophysical character. Time measurement and the time of the event is the function of the right hemisphere. The left hemisphere of the head reflects time as an abstract phenomenon. If a person has problems with the left hemisphere of his head he can operate with calendar. If there is a problem with right hemisphere, the human being identifies himself in the temporal line (from past to future).

Time can be represented also as a language-cultural concept. Different peoples perceive time in absolutely different ways. The representatives of the British culture put into a focus the following characteristics of time:

- multifunctional idea of time
- time dominates over space
- materialistic approach to time
- personal obligation when dealing with time
- the limit of time
- time is a valuable resource, commodity

Time can be explicated with the help of cognitive metaphors as "time is a landscape", "time is a moving object", "time is a valuable resource", "time is a container".

In the beginning I tried to identify the term "TIME" and show different approaches to its study. From my point of view it is possible to explore this phenomenon in connection with other basic ontological phenomena like space and border from the prism of cognitive science. Cognitive science has all necessary tools to consider terms as a random of different representation from abstract to precise things. Nowadays one of the most significant approaches to explore the world is based on conceptualizing. Consequently, this approach

allows us to perceive the time phenomenon as a part of the world picture, language world picture. Time, space, changes, border are included in the system of human values which are very important for human beings in the process of perceiving the world outside. Otherwise, time can be named as a main component of the world picture. At the same time, there are different ways how the human beings accept and reflect these elements. Moreover, space concept is strongly correlated with time: what happened to a man is happening in time, through time. What is going with us in time is considered to be changes.

All these categories – time, space, change, and border can be represented as concepts. The concept is mental structure, but it has many various representations including verbal and non-verbal one. To achieve the aim of our research stated above we need to identify the essential elements of the concept model, describe its distinctive characteristic, and actualize language and cultural nominations of the concept. It also necessary to explore how extra-linguistic knowledge influences on the ways of representation this concept in the Russian and English language world pictures.

Having identified the objects of my research and the subject of the research (verbal representation of the concepts in the English and Russian languages) I could proceed to collecting and analyzing facts about time. Time seems to be more essential and more abstract category. That is why it will more difficult to find the way of its representation beyond the human cognition.

This cognitive approach helps to understand better the choice of language means, lexical devices, psychological process in case of multicultural communication. We think not only about language itself, but also about cognition and communicative behavior.

The cognitive structures determine the national specific of stereotypes and our social behavior. As a result we get the final product-speech communicative patterns. The cognate model can be represented by different cognitive blocks. The cognitive structure is a highest point of pyramid, which is made up of different slots. It is a network; it looks like a puzzle penetrated with the links between slots. Each slot represents a typical situation and some important characteristics. It can be also a hierarchy of the levels. There are different types: static (if it consists of images about a name or a situation) and dynamic (if it is represented by slots or scripts). Frame structure is cognitive unite, represented by associations and mental images of an individual. It accumulates and keeps information about the most common and significant nationally –marked associations. Cultural frame structure is represented by awareness of specific cultural identities. These are common stereotypes.

2.0 Chapter 2. The language methods of time explication

The language systems, the linguistic tools, which can be explicated verbally, help us to identify distinctive cultural stereotypes. For example, in cross-cultural context the most popular cultural stereotypes are about the style and language of greetings, addressing people, discussing personal issues during small talks, interrupting. Stereotypes are to be handled with caution. Cultural frame system is a more complex system of basic cognitive elements. The key element is an individual image of the national reality.

According to the cognitive approach successful intercultural communication is based on right combination of these basic cognitive elements of the speakers. There might be some fails if the basic cognitive elements differ from each other greatly.

In the reality the cognitive image creates potential associations with national values and beliefs, social norms, behavior and national manners.

Taking into account what has been said previously I would like to distinguish my project. The aim of my research is to analyze time concept and the ways of its representations in the Russian and English language with the help of theoretical basis of modern cognitive linguistics, language and cultural studies and other humanitarian sciences.

In everyday life we face a lot of traces of the definition of time. There are a lot of definitions of this word. From linguistic point of view, we can deal with the number of lexicosemantic variants of becoming something else or becoming different. In real life the dimension we do not deal with pure time because the concept is rather abstract one. We deal with the way how we feel these changes, activities, actions happening to us in time and how we can reflect on it. What is more important is our own attitude towards this or that case and its evaluation. We face the change and put it in our own paradigm of values, social norms and stereotypes.

There are two significant approaches in defining the nature of time – the first is mythological (cycling) model of time, the second idea represents time as is a line model (appeared due to Christianity). The following quotation will illustrate the images of time and its perception: the historic consciousness organizes all events happened to us in the past as a chain of cause-and-effect relations. The past events consequently are referred with the earlier events, and again we get back to the earliest and earliest event. We always have to look back at what happened to us last time. We do not remember about the very beginning of this chain, and we try to find the cause and conquer with the aftereffects.

On the one hand, time, and the exact period of it, seems to be given “a priori”. We were born with the sense of time, we spend our life in time, and finally we die. The Greeks called us «mortal» compared to immortal Olympian Gods who enjoy their perennial youths. It is also widely known that the idea of time has been changed completely during last centuries.

On the other hand, cosmological consciousness gets us back to the primary stages, to the initial baseline which never disappears. It exists all the time.

Both cycling and line models of time can co-exist in history. But the question is how they correlate with each other or it is the matter of dominance. The situation of one model prevailing on the other is called “worldview marker of the epoch” (Яковлева, 1994:35).

3.0 Chapter 3. A cycling time model

Time perception is individual for each civilization. It depends of “precise coordination system”, national temporal vies and mentality. In the Archaic period early man saw only present time, past time was unclear for him, and future seems to bring a sense of uncertainty. From the mythological point of view time is represented by the Chronos (Kronos), пожирающем людей. Time was associated with a river: “to fall into oblivion”, “to fall off the edge of the earth”.

It is widely recognized that since ancient times there have been existing two models of time. The first approach depicts time as an action of rotating, moving round the circle. In case we can mention calendar, other seasonal life events. Life cycle is represented by the consequences of the repeated actions. We use this model when we think about day periods, seasons, time for meals (breakfast, lunch, and dinner), birth and death.

On the other hand time can be seen as a line model, as an arrow flying ahead through the past to the future. This model leads to historical perception of life and being: every single action or event is considered to be unique and valuable for the human being. Actions cannot be repeated, cannot return to the beginning. The most significant feature of this liner model is evolution, development of any action or any state.

With the advent of counting systems let us measure and fix the time duration. The idea of discretization of time periods brings us to the idea of calendar. The appearance of calendar led to the appearance of time beginning concept in the mythological consciousness: establishing of Cosmos relates to the “early times” in Homer. In the mythological sense for the archaic man it was not important to fix a certain action in time. Mythological time existed “out of time”, “above time”. “Mythological time is made up different chunks which become

more visible than real time. There is no idea about duration of any action and its place in the chain. As a result the border between past, present and future is disappearing.

The world order also exists in this model: when Cosmos is collapsed the chaos sets down. To recover the world order on the new stage the man is required to bring some efforts called rituals, e.g. setting up a spiritual tress as a symbol of the world time vertical. The established cycle of the events is associated with the order and life. It is clear for the ancient man. Otherwise the collapse of the cycle symbolizes the ending of the human life and existence.

The second peculiar feature of this archaic time perception is time/space syncretism. The ancient man sees time in connection with space. These two categories are not separable for him. This idea can be named as a turning point which brings us to the present reality. Up to the XIII century space dominates over time.

In the mythological tradition time/space combination is represented by the circle. It became a symbol of united universe, valuable resource for ordinary peoples. It also symbolizes the ending of any period of action. In Early German mythological model it is possible to see they interpenetrate each other, they are inseparable. (Топорова, 1994: 234).

The analysis of the early German epos shows that a cycling time model was prior than a linear system. The world tree of the Scandinavian mythology can be chunked vertically into three blocks: past, present, future. There is Midgard in the central part – the kingdom where people live. There is a kingdom of gods- Asgard- upwards. There is – Hell downwards. All these kingdoms have now borders. And you can travel through them.

Thirdly, in the mythological world picture time is personified. It symbolizes naïve cognition of the world order when unknown objects can be shown as known with help of simple cognitive tools. It is always easy to find something concrete and certain in the nature of any phenomenon rather to deal with its abstract character. In Early German language, in the Greek mythology time was deified and became a cult.

In that ancient times it was not possible for the archaic man identify time with all its attributes in the more complicated way. Time is a very abstract concept to deal with. And the men were not able to discover fully its nature because of his low level of abstract cognition development at that stage. Mythological Time perception was based on the mythological illusion of time and space syncretism.

Time seems to puzzle for the men. To find the ways of its time can be described with help of movement in the space. There are two cognitive metaphors in this case – time is river, time is wanderer. Human life can be represented as a set of time periods full of different

events and activities. The man goes through his life as he goes through temporal “containers”, “boxes”, which are set in order from the past to future. Each of these numerable containers represents human activities. The appearance of cycling model of time was determined by social life order and social mentality.

In conclusion I would like to mention that a cycling model and a liner model of time differ from each other greatly: cycling time is more abstract than liner time. Cycling time is associated with the events and activities produced by the man. It is a very important distinguished feature of mythological world picture. The archaic man recognized the world order as a unity of time and space. From his naïve point of view the world order was based on the syncretism of time and space. In this unity time can be depicted as a chain of moving events happening in the space. So, time can be estimated with the help of space. In the cycling model of time the most significant role belongs to present. Present represents the number of repeated “long lasting pasts”. In this case present time is axiological more important for the archaic man.

K. Levi-Stross in his theory identifies this quality of the past as “devotion to past”. He claims for the peoples living in primitive communal system “past” is considered to be “out of time” model. In his theory such primitive or archaic time perception leads to very strange behavior: peoples demonstrate strong unwillingness to implement new achievements, use benefits of new civilizations. (Леви-Стросс, 1994: 45).

Since the history of civilization moved forward the idea of time has been completely changed. New ideas and new achievements are becoming more popular and prestigious. A new epoch man put in his picture not only “pasts”. He tries to evaluate what is going with him at present. So, he started to deal with the opposition “past/present” more precisely.

4.0 Chapter 4. A line time model

The appearance of new time model is associated with the influence of Christianity. Bible brings the beginning and the ending of the history. Consequently now Time is perceived as moving object which goes ahead as a line. This is the only one way and irreversible process. With the advent of a liner model of time it was possible to counter past – present –future. Christianity provided a human being a chance to look at history and memory from another angle. On the contrary, cycling time system perceives time as a chain of repeated actions in present.

Firstly the idea of changing historic process following through time appeared in the early Christian philosophy of Augustine Avreliy. He tries to identify the paradoxical character of

time and claims the time is made up “that which has already gone (past) and that which will have gone soon (past) or does not exist yet, and that we have but we can’t measure it, it has no duration – we deal with the number of present moments”. He described all time period in connection with present: there are three times: “present of the past”, “present of the present”, and “present of the future”. All these time ideas exist in our souls: “present of the past is our memory”, “present of the present is our sense perception”, “present of the future” is our anticipation”. From his point of view memory becomes the key thought of time. Life of a human soul is impossible without memory. It also can be noticed that the center of philosophic discourse traverse from Cosmos into History, and time is not a cosmic category any longer. Time becomes a category of history.

In other words, time can be analyzed through the prism of personal soul life. There is a strong connection between time and memory. Christian dogma of God called into being two absolutely new approaches to identifying time- physiological and historical ways of analysis.

In the Medieval picture we are able to identify most typical features of a line time model existed that time.

Secondly, there is a strong link between eternity and time of terrestrial history. In materialistic philosophy time is identified as infinite (boundless) period, so, in this meaning time and eternity are synonyms.

In the Christian outlook the term of time (*tempus*) was separated from the term of eternity. Time is not the same as eternity. The main difference is that time constantly flows, constantly changes its shape and gives all the objects in the human world the form of existence. Time gives all things around us a chance to exist. Time is illusion, and in this sense time cannot be compared with eternity.

Time is way and a shape of everything in the human (mortal world). Eternity is an attribute of God. It can be measured by precise periods. It is not consisted of periods. Time is an attribute of the universal history, it has its beginning and ending. It is limited as human being history is limited.

In the naïve world picture in the Medieval time the necessity of time calculating raised significantly. People need to standardize their life, to set up an order in the business and work. But at that time the appearance of first European commercial network and great geographical discoveries influenced the attitude toward time. G. le Goff claims: «the technological sphere offers absolutely new dimension of

time- line and predictable, moving straight forward on the contrary with cycling and unpredictable » (Ле Гофф, 2000).

This new approach to handling with time led to the weakness of the role of the Church in this sphere. The institute of Church had to accept the appearance of new time perception which was not connected with religious roots and dogmata. New time was connected with new business activities, with the labor of urban workers and craftsmen, with the traders and new clock-towers. In the XIV century when it became possible to measure time with the help of first instruments – mechanic clock the Church was absolutely unable to control time and describe it as a religious fact. (Ле Гофф, 2001: 134).

But at the same time there were cross-bordering points in this issue of time. There was a combination of two systems. On the one hand, there were traces of new time perception represented by cultural medieval establishment and naïve time perception represented by public culture. It was the difference between literary and old archaic stereotypes.

M. Bakhtin depicted that Medieval conciseness as double world where new culture and festive public culture were mixed (Bakhtin, 1990: 45).

This fact of two time perception system proves the existence of two forms of outlook – literary and naïve. Time belonged to only establishment. Ordinary people did not deal with time – they could not deal with it, they did not possess it, they did not identify it. They followed different time manifestations like bells, gongs, knight's tournaments and other rituals.

The urban population was indifferent to time. Time was accepted as a way to innovations and development. But innovation can be a threat. It was not necessary to deal with personal time. Their life was stable, traditionally organized as a chain of every day routines. Even smart and sophisticated people demonstrated only perception of time through of past – they did not value present or what was going with them in the present.

The third feature of Christian time was the idea of time as inconvertibility and irreversibility of terrestrial historic time. The difference between Christian time orientation and the archaic approach: Christian time orientation put into the picture past, present and future. Cycling time is constantly disappearing. But it was not disappear completely with the advent of vector time model. The roots of the different approaches lay in perception of historic time. New mass consciousness turned into a new qualified level. This change also was in time. At the level of bookish description and from the scholastic philosophy Christian perception of history played a leading role. The idea of the liner countable time did not have pragmatic meaning for the ordinary people then for higher social establishment.

5.0 Chapter 5 Conclusion

The decisive moment in changes of time perception – the way from the archaic cycling model to the linear model of time – can be caused by social and economic changes in the society on the exact stage of the social development.

Time is perceived by the man, experienced by man, time is processed by human consciousness, and finally is fixed in communication activity with the help of linguistics means.

The individual view of abstract time most often is transmitted together with the submission of its event filling: time is indicated not as a faceless abstract continuum but the continuum where events and changes take place in. We could never measure absolute pure time, but always relate time with periodic or free movement in space, which focuses on the dynamic character of irreversible changes.

The human perception of time begins on a visual basis of spatial dynamics in correlation with changing things in space. The idea of time begins with the idea moving object, it can therefore be said that changes and movements constitute the central component of the nuclear part of the key-word of the time concept.

From a diachronic point of view in the structure of the concept it is possible to identify several “layers”: the most remote, least up-to-date-etymological layer, or internal form. The etymology of key “time” in the Old English language attests to the archaic perception of time as a cyclic closed system. Understanding of the world as deployed in space and devoid of speakers was peculiar to pagan culture. As a result of insufficient nomination of separate categories of abstract thinking ideology, in particular — time was carried out in ancient languages mostly by association with physical actions produced in space.

Then, when the dominance of the linear model of time on cyclical topical for the archaic period, the value of “tide”, “over”, “time of year” is pushed to the periphery. Indo-European and the early German forms contain linguistic reflexes, which in modern English determine the main features of time –dimension, length, integrity, coherence , as well as feasibility within the movement and other activities, and to relate the concept of time with the notion of space within a single human concept sphere.

For the second layer to “passive” grounds, which are already obsolete, “historical” are those which analyzed by historical epochs, and comprehension of the linear concept of time from the point of view of three temporary modes: past-present-future. Further interest in the

time category has been driven by the pursuit of empirical cognition of reality and emphasized variability of being. Reflexes of such changes are reflected in the national world picture.

In synchronous aspect the time concept can be described by linguistic means, providing a different means of expression: the estimated time to experience space/time events, psychological effects of subjective perception, often identified with the characteristics of the ontological categories of time, giving her the ability to stretch and expand to decelerate and accelerate.

The evaluation of time phenomenon occurs when a person looks at it through the prism of “substantive” realities and actions. Language consciousness of the person who is looking for specific time representation begins with the first idea of time. This process of thinking finds expression in various verbal images; most frequent are metaphorical models of the time.

Despite the fact that time universally, specific philosophical systems leaves its mark on the perception of time, resulting in varying degrees of view this category in different cultures. Interpretation of its linguistic and cultural component confirms that under the influence of global economic processes that exist in this society, time becomes meaningful material attribute for people.

In modern cultural paradigm the time dimension in the material values and units is adopted. New type of society is strongly oriented to multiply its profits. In this matter, time is a valuable resource; it is one of the values which also can be dependable on the cultural identity of the speakers

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