

Folklore as an Object of Ethnolinguistics: Linguocultural Aspect

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Mankind in the twentieth century came to the realization of the fact that culture is an activity which corresponds to its idea. Culture is inseparable from other forms of a human activity (cognition, morality, arts, etc.) and a language in this context acts as a form, a vital element of a national culture of a people.

Since the twentieth century culture has started to be regarded as a specific system of values and ideas. So culture can be understood as a complex of absolute values created by a person, it is an expression of people's relations in objects, actions, words which matter to people, so a system of values is one of the most significant sides of any culture.

Every new speaker of the language forms his/her view of the world not on the basis of their own independent procession of thoughts and emotions but within the limits of the experience of their language ancestors which was already in the language in the forms of myths and archetypes. By mastering this experience we can just try to use it and slightly perfect it.

The language doesn't just name what is in the culture, it doesn't just express or form the culture but the language develops itself in the culture.

The links between language and culture are various and stable. The language can be regarded as a tool of culture, one of its parts (especially if we speak about literary language or the language of folklore), it can be described through the signs and indications which are general for all the phenomena of any culture. But we should pay special attention to the fact that language and culture may be looked upon as independent, autonomous semiotic structures which are in many respects structurally isomorphic. The commonness of the notions applied to language and culture can come from the same point of view to these phenomena as semiotic systems which are described with the help of the same logical notions.

As V.V. Kasevich thinks "any language remembers and keeps the mysteries; the highest meaning is concealed in it" [Kasevich 1990: 25]. But still one should notice that the system of language meanings is connected with the system of knowledge by means of a cognitive interpretation. The system of language meanings is related to the cultural competence of speakers of the language by means of interpretation. The conceptual realization of this competence is one of the most characteristic features of a people's mentality. In some researches we can find some evidence that in the language by means of the system with its characteristic images, standards, stereotypes, symbols the worldview of a people is shown. And this understanding of the world can be seen in the context of cultural traditions. It is this relativity that shows that the language doesn't only express the reality in the form of its picture of the world, but it reproduces national-cultural norms and traditions of a people from one generation to another.

A semiotic unity of culture and languages assists to the idea that they possess similar functions: "communicative (exchange of specially valuable information); cumulative (knowledge accumulation and storage of this information); adaptive (ensuring of sequencing with the outer world); directive (putting in good order the behavior of a person in a society)

and the most significant – productive (assimilation and reformation of reality)” (Kukushkina 1984: 43).

The twentieth century, especially its second half, has put a question about the knowledge integration. The mankind has realized that the activity must be understood in its whole as the integration of different types of knowledge brings new ideas and opportunities.

For example, ethnography studies material and spiritual culture, peculiarities of customs and traditions of different cultures; country studies deals with the complex study of this or that country; sociolinguistics can be characterized a science which studies problems of interrelations between language and society as in any society language is a means of accumulating, keeping and transferring knowledge which the society possesses. So all the social, economic and cultural changes can't but have an influence on different levels of a language.

As it has already been shown perception and understanding of a world differs from one nation to another. Representatives of each linguoculture see the world in the light of their own language which is the reflection of cultural and genre belonging. Not all of them are able to reflect the individuality of a person in a language that's why the emotiveness, which is present in all types of texts, has its own specific genre features.

Specific genre features are shown in the specific forms of a thematic content, style and composition; in the existence of a typical expressiveness, norms of an etiquette, axiological norms, an emotional mood of participants of communication and a high degree of stability and compulsion is an inherent part of these features [Bakhtin 1996].

The definition of an emotive specific character of different types of the texts is connected with their typical genre features and can be classified according to the following criteria: 1) a typical place of emotive themes in a thematic structure of the text; 2) a permissible degree of an expression of an emotional attitude of an author to the components of a communicative situation in the text; 3) images of a typical author and the addressee of the text; 4) the admissible degree of the expressiveness to convey emotions.

Ethnolinguistics is a relatively new discipline, its tasks, subject and object, methods, interconnection with other disciplines were formed by N.I. Tolstoy. He gave two definitions of ethnolinguistics. One of them is rather narrow: “Ethnolinguistics is a branch of linguistics or – broader – a school of linguistics which directs a researcher to consider the interdependence and interconnection between a language and a spiritual culture, a language and a people's mentality, a language and folk arts, their interrelation and different types of their correspondence” [Tolstoy 1995: 27]. In this definition ethnolinguistics is understood as a branch of linguistics and its object is a language in its connection to culture. The second definition is a broad one and here ethnolinguistics can be considered as “a complex discipline, the subject of which is ‘a plan of content’ of culture, folk psychology and mythology without taking into consideration the means and ways of their formal embodiment (a word, an object, a rite, an image)” [Ibid. : 39-40]. Gradually N.I. Tolstoy develops the second, broad, complex definition in his researches.

So the object of ethnolinguistics is not only a language, but other forms and substances, in which collective consciousness, people's mentality, formed in this or that ethnos, “a picture of the world” can be traced; in other words the whole people's culture, all its types, genres and forms. The subject of ethnolinguistics is a plan of expression of any culture, its semantic (symbolic) language, its categories and mechanisms. Its aim is a semantic reconstruction of a traditional (archaic, preChristian) picture of the world, a view of the world, a system of values.

The most essential idea for ethnolinguistics – the unity of traditional inner culture, its semantic unity of all its genres and forms – can be illustrated by some definite examples how the same meanings are expressed in the language, phraseology, beliefs, rituals, folklore texts

and how some genres and forms of the culture help in semantic reconstruction and explanations of other genres.

The notion of folklore is a key for many humanitarian sciences. In itself it includes two possible interpretations: in a narrow sense it is a unity of verbal texts in an oral tradition of an ethnos with its own special genre system, a set of plots, characters, expressive means; in a broad sense it is a traditional folk culture in the variety of its forms and ways of expression (rites, beliefs, arts, folk knowledge). Nonverbal components of a folk culture which are present in the second definition are included in the notion "folklore" in many foreign countries whereas Russian and Soviet linguists consider the definition of a folklore to be restricted to the limits of folk verbal arts.

The appearance of a folklore (verbal) plot, motif, image, the whole text as well as a formation of a definite folklore system (with its range of genres, codes, ideas and connections) is still one of the greatest riddles of any culture. In the most general sense one can say that here we deal not with an indefinite number of single actions which can't be fixed only because of their oral character but with the processes having neither beginning nor end, which happen unconsciously, due to some inner laws of the culture. One of such laws is that such processes are naturally included into different sides of the life of a society, they happen inside it, are its integral part.

The verblity gives creative processes to specific forms, defines ways of expressing general ideas for the culture, realization of common goals, coding of common meanings. And of course verblity causes a lot in the character itself, in the mechanism of materialization of ideas and meanings into the real texts and their constitutive plots, motifs, images.

Folklore is "a complex of verbal texts which have entered the oral, everyday tradition of a nation, that's why while studying any genre the definition of characteristic traits, peculiarities of their formation and development is a defining factor" [Chistov 1986: 105].

In the unity of different sides the elements of ethnographic reality (such as the parts carrying the character of organizing systems) with their Codes, their own semantics, structures and peculiarities of functioning can play a defining role for folklore works. It is they that not only "are reflected or described" in folklore but actively influence the addition and the development by a folklore system of their own codes, semantics, structure, plots and images.

In the least way such an influence can be felt from the sides of those spheres of reality in which an empirical beginning, everyday themes, a disorganized flow of everyday facts prevail. It is connected with the aesthetic and functional origin of a folklore which is not aimed at reproducing life in its "natural" environment. The relations with the reality happen by means of the spheres where the material of the primary generalization and systems of signs have existed and special codes and laws have already been functioning: traditional ethnosocial institutions, rituals, norms of everyday life, laws, systems of kinship, beliefs and notions. It's from the different systems regarding their etymology, meaning and content that the main building material can be taken for all these genres. In the same way a great number of motifs, situations, images giving the life to new topics, plots, collisions, characters, languages can flow from the same systems. Folklore can be looked upon as a rich world of ethnographic reality and at the same time it recodes this reality.

For many genres of archaic and partially classical folklore these parts of this world can be regarded like generating: these systems appear either simultaneously with other parts of an ethnographic reality, together with them or even before them or by means of their singling out from different ethnographic substances or as a result of their "secondary" interpretation, "transition" to verbal forms. Here we deal with universal processes naturally happening in the culture of all the peoples and taking a specific character on different stages and in different conditions.

Having existed for centuries fairy-tales undergo different changes gradually losing their initial look and acquiring a more modern aspect. That's why while studying fairy-tales it's necessary to take into consideration the fact that they reflect in their content and ideological direction different temporal intervals showing various moral, spiritual and social aspects of their existence.

A fairy-tale is always active. It lacks the idea of submissiveness and obedience to evil forces or dangerous elements of Nature. A fairy character fights with evil forces and these characters never forgive their foes.

Fairy-tales reflect historical conditions of a life of a certain people, their national psychology, a way of life but at the same time they include main topical motifs which are typical for other peoples. This idea can be easily seen in the construction of the whole fairy-tale literature where one can find magical, adventurous fairy-tales, fairy-tales about animals.

The main part in fairy-tale genres belongs without any doubt to tales about animals. Having appeared in ancient times they were looked upon as the initial layer of an emerging culture, the basis of the appearance of other types of fairy-tales.

Fairy-tales about animals are based on naturalistic observations of lives of both domestic and wild animals: they show their peculiarities pretty well. Long observations of a people state common laws of mutual development of a person and nature and their influence upon each other. People are often associated with representatives of animal kingdoms. As a result fairy tales about animals become more long-lived and full of a deep philosophical sense.

Fairy-tales are a source in which a people's soul can be reflected. Thoughts and aspirations, hopes and dreams are put by people in their fairy-tales. People put their belief in the triumph of justice, victory over darkness, sensibility over ignorance, freedom over slavery.

Talking about folklore as an object of ethnolinguistics one should consider its social, aesthetic and linguistic nature. Folklore is regarded by a society as a precious representation of the ethnic specific character, the spirit of a definite people. The correlation between something common to all mankind and specifically ethnic can be caused by definite conditions of the development of an ethnos: the degree of its consolidation, the character of its contacts with other peoples, the mentality of people and so on. The folklore tradition creates its own world which doesn't have direct analogies with the reality. This world is made by a folk fantasy, it represents a transformed reality.

Nevertheless, whatever complex the connection between the folk reality and the true reality is, it exists and reflects not simply and not only the peculiarities of being and thinking of a definite people. The aesthetic or functional nature of folklore is connected with the fact that it can't reproduce the life in its natural manifestations. The relations with the reality happen in a mediated way: the spheres of life which already have the initial generalizations or sign systems provide the main material for the genres, motifs, plots, images. In their turn they give life to new themes, plots, characters, languages. In general these spheres are traditional ethnosocial institutions such as a family, customs, rites, norms of modes of life. A folklore art absorbs a rich world of ethnographic reality by recoding it [Putilov 2003]. As for the linguistic aspect one should mention that a folklore text is secondary in relation to the language as opposed to the nonfolk speech reality. The texts generated by the latter linguists suggest calling as "for one occasion only" texts. These texts do not generate a tradition as it is. The folklore functioning is made by way of transmission of not only ways and means of organization of texts generation but the texts themselves.

At the same time it's necessary to pay attention to the fact that phraseological units which can be regarded equally both as the result of a speech practice accumulating in the language and as elementary folklore texts functioning in "for an occasion only" texts.

So far the notion of folklore is a complex category of humanitarian sciences regarded by each of these sciences and each linguistic school in its own way and from different perspectives.

The phenomenon of folklore is completely dependent in its characteristics of its ethnic substance generating this phenomenon.

The following aspects of the folklore nature – social, aesthetic, linguistic, cultural – can help ethno-linguistics to use folklore as an object of study which gives a clear view of interrelations of the language of a separately taken ethnic community and its culture.

Language is a very important part of spiritual baggage of a nation, it can help to characterize a definite epoch, definite societies. Language absorbs in itself numerous combinations of the results of a person's activity, his/her thoughts, their spirit. It marks all the fragments of a human activity and describes them in a variety of means and ways.

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Resumé

Štúdiá sa zaoberá výskumom lingvokultúrneho aspektu folklóru ako objektu etnolingvistiky a definovaniu cieľa, objektu a predmetu výskumu danej náuky. V texte sa zdôrazňuje myšlienka, že pri skúmaní folklórnych žánrov je nevyhnutné upriamiť pozornosť aj na ich charakteristické črty, osobitosti ich vzniku a vývoja. Štúdiá taktiež pojednáva o integrite tradičnej duchovnej kultúry, obsahovej jednote jej všetkých žánrov a foriem.