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THE FORMATION AND DEVELOPMENT STAGES OF LINGUOCULTURAL STUDIES IN MODERN LINGUISTICS

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Abstract

This article examines the formation and development of linguocultural studies within the framework of modern linguistics. The research traces the evolution of the discipline from its philosophical foundations in the 19th century to its establishment as an independent interdisciplinary field in the late 20th century. Special attention is paid to the anthropocentric paradigm, which reoriented linguistic research toward the human factor, cognition, and culture. The article also outlines key theoretical contributions, major scholars, and contemporary applications of linguoculturology in intercultural communication, translation studies, and global discourse analysis.

Keywords: linguoculturology, anthropocentric paradigm, linguistic worldview, cultural concept, Sapir–Whorf hypothesis, intercultural communication.

Introduction

The rapid development of linguistics in the 21st century has led to the emergence of new theoretical paradigms and interdisciplinary approaches. One of the most influential transformations in contemporary linguistic science is the transition toward the anthropocentric paradigm, which places the human being at the center of linguistic inquiry. Unlike structuralism, which treated language as a closed system of signs, the anthropocentric approach interprets language as a dynamic, socially embedded, and culturally conditioned phenomenon.

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Within this paradigm, linguocultural studies (linguoculturology) have emerged as a significant and independent branch of linguistic science. The discipline explores the interaction between language and culture, analyzing how linguistic units encode cultural values, national mentality, and collective identity. The purpose of this article is to examine the historical stages of linguoculturology's formation and to analyze its theoretical and methodological foundations.

The Anthropocentric Paradigm in Linguistics

Linguistic science traditionally distinguishes three major paradigms in its historical development:

1. The comparative-historical paradigm
2. The structural-systemic paradigm
3. The anthropocentric paradigm

The anthropocentric paradigm represents a fundamental shift in linguistic thought. It emphasizes that language cannot be studied independently of its speaker, cultural context, and cognitive processes. In this framework, language is viewed as:

A tool of human cognition

A mechanism of cultural transmission

A means of constructing social reality

A reflection of national worldview

The emergence of disciplines such as cognitive linguistics, psycholinguistics, sociolinguistics, ethnolinguistics, pragmatics, and neurolinguistics further strengthened the anthropocentric orientation. All these branches recognize that linguistic phenomena are deeply rooted in human experience and cultural environment.

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Initial Stage: Philosophical Foundations (19th – Early 20th Century)

The theoretical roots of linguoculturology can be traced back to the ideas of Wilhelm von Humboldt, who argued that each language embodies a specific worldview. According to him, language is not merely a communication tool but a formative organ of thought. His concept of the “inner form of language” laid the groundwork for understanding the relationship between language, cognition, and culture.

Later, Edward Sapir and Benjamin Lee Whorf developed the theory of linguistic relativity, commonly known as the Sapir–Whorf hypothesis. They proposed that language influences human perception and conceptualization of reality. This hypothesis includes two main versions:

Linguistic determinism (strong version)

Linguistic relativity (weak version)

Although the deterministic interpretation has been widely debated, the idea that language shapes worldview remains central to linguocultural studies.

Additional contributions were made by scholars such as A. A. Potebnya, Franz Boas, Leo Weisgerber, and Anna Wierzbicka. These researchers emphasized the cultural embeddedness of linguistic structures and introduced concepts such as linguistic worldview, national mentality, and semantic universals.

During this stage, the philosophical and theoretical basis for linguoculturology was established, although the discipline had not yet acquired independent status.

Development Stage: Institutionalization and Theoretical Consolidation (Mid-20th Century)

In the mid-20th century, linguoculturology began to take shape as a distinct scientific field. Researchers moved from abstract philosophical reflections to systematic analysis of cultural meanings encoded in language.

An important contribution was made by Yuri Lotman and the Tartu–Moscow Semiotic School. Lotman viewed culture as a semiotic system and language as

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one of its primary codes. He argued that culture functions as a collective memory preserved and transmitted through linguistic signs.

During this period, scholars developed methodological tools for:

Conceptual analysis

Cultural-semantic interpretation

Discourse analysis

Comparative linguocultural research

The term “linguoculturology” gained recognition in the late 20th century, particularly through the work of the Moscow Phraseological School led by V. N. Teliya. Their studies demonstrated how phraseological units reflect cultural stereotypes, historical experience, and national values.

At this stage, linguoculturology achieved institutional recognition and methodological clarity.

Modern Stage: Globalization and Applied Perspectives (Late 20th – 21st Century)

The final stage in the development of linguoculturology is characterized by expansion and practical application. Globalization, migration processes, and digital communication have intensified intercultural interaction, making linguocultural competence increasingly important.

Today, linguoculturology plays a crucial role in:

Intercultural communication

Translation theory and practice

Foreign language teaching

Political and media discourse analysis

Diplomatic communication

Cross-cultural marketing

Modern research integrates cognitive linguistics, conceptual metaphor theory, corpus linguistics, and discourse studies. Scholars analyze cultural concepts such

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as “freedom,” “family,” “honor,” “time,” and “power” across languages, revealing how these concepts reflect national identity and cultural priorities. Furthermore, contemporary linguoculturology examines digital discourse, social media communication, and globalized linguistic practices, expanding its analytical scope.

Theoretical Significance and Contemporary Relevance

Linguoculturology occupies a central position in contemporary linguistic science due to its integrative and interdisciplinary nature. Its theoretical significance lies primarily in its ability to synthesize linguistic, cultural, cognitive, and social dimensions into a unified analytical framework. Unlike traditional structural linguistics, which focuses on internal language systems, linguoculturology expands the scope of inquiry by incorporating extralinguistic factors such as historical memory, national identity, value systems, and collective consciousness. One of the most important theoretical contributions of linguoculturology is the recognition of language as a cultural phenomenon. It challenges the notion of linguistic neutrality and demonstrates that language is inherently value-laden and culturally marked. Lexical units, phraseological expressions, metaphors, and discourse structures reflect the worldview, traditions, and ideological orientations of a speech community.

By analyzing linguistic units as cultural signs, linguoculturology provides deeper insight into how meaning is constructed and transmitted. It shows that semantic structures cannot be fully understood without considering the cultural context in which they function.

The discipline has significantly contributed to the elaboration of the concept of the linguistic worldview. This concept explains how language encodes culturally specific models of reality. Linguoculturology demonstrates that different languages categorize space, time, emotions, social hierarchy, and moral values in distinct ways.

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For example, the representation of family relations, honor, hospitality, or freedom varies across linguistic communities, reflecting their historical and cultural experiences. Through comparative analysis, linguoculturology reveals both universal and culture-specific conceptual patterns.

Another theoretical achievement is the development of conceptual analysis as a methodological tool. Cultural concepts are understood as complex mental formations combining semantic, emotional, symbolic, and axiological components.

Conceptual research enables scholars to examine how key cultural values are linguistically encoded and how they shape collective identity. This approach deepens our understanding of the relationship between language, cognition, and social behavior.

Linguoculturology strengthens the anthropocentric paradigm by emphasizing the role of the speaker as a bearer of cultural knowledge. It underscores that linguistic competence includes not only grammatical mastery but also cultural awareness. In this sense, linguoculturology broadens the understanding of communicative competence, incorporating sociocultural and pragmatic dimensions.

Contemporary Relevance

The relevance of linguoculturology in the 21st century is closely connected with globalization, digital transformation, migration processes, and increasing intercultural interaction. Modern societies are characterized by cultural diversity, and effective communication requires an understanding of cultural semantics.

In intercultural communication studies, linguoculturology provides essential theoretical foundations. Misunderstandings between representatives of different cultures often arise not from grammatical errors but from differences in cultural norms, communicative strategies, and value systems.

Linguoculturology helps identify culturally marked expressions, politeness strategies, indirectness patterns, and culturally specific metaphors that may cause

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misinterpretation. This makes the discipline highly relevant in diplomacy, international business, and global cooperation.

In translation theory and practice, linguoculturology plays a crucial role in addressing cultural lacunae — elements that have no direct equivalents in another language. Translators must interpret not only lexical meaning but also cultural connotations, symbolic associations, and pragmatic implications.

Linguocultural analysis allows translators to preserve cultural authenticity while ensuring communicative adequacy. It is especially important in literary translation, where metaphors, idioms, and cultural references carry deep semantic weight.

Modern foreign language education increasingly recognizes the importance of cultural competence. Teaching grammar and vocabulary alone is insufficient for effective communication. Learners must understand cultural norms, etiquette formulas, and communicative conventions.

Linguoculturology contributes to the development of culturally oriented teaching methodologies, helping learners acquire intercultural sensitivity and avoid pragmatic failures.

Contemporary linguoculturology also analyzes media and political discourse, where language functions as a tool of ideological construction. Cultural symbols, metaphors, and narratives are used to shape public opinion and national identity. In the digital age, online communication has created new cultural codes — memes, hashtags, emojis, and hybrid linguistic forms. These phenomena reflect rapidly evolving cultural meanings and require new analytical approaches within linguoculturology.

Globalization has intensified the tension between cultural preservation and cultural integration. Linguoculturology plays a vital role in studying how national identity is maintained through language in multicultural environments. It also examines how languages adapt to global influences while retaining culturally specific features.

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The future development of linguoculturology lies in its interdisciplinary expansion. Integration with cognitive neuroscience, corpus linguistics, artificial intelligence, and digital humanities will further enrich its analytical potential. Moreover, the increasing importance of multicultural societies suggests that linguoculturology will remain essential for promoting tolerance, mutual understanding, and effective cross-cultural dialogue.

Conclusion

The formation and development of linguocultural studies reflect a profound transformation in linguistic science. From its philosophical origins in the works of Humboldt and Sapir to its institutionalization in the late 20th century and its contemporary interdisciplinary expansion, linguoculturology has evolved into a dynamic and essential field.

By examining language as a cultural and cognitive phenomenon, linguoculturology deepens our understanding of national identity, worldview, and social interaction. In an increasingly interconnected world, the discipline not only advances theoretical linguistics but also plays a vital role in fostering intercultural understanding and global communication.

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