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**RUSSIAN MENTALITY AND EUROPEAN IDENTITY. THE
LINGUISTIC ASPECT OF THE PROBLEM**

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Abstract

The article presents the results of linguocognitive reconstruction of lexical-semantic fields "Russian mentality" and "European identity". The linguistic material is taken from the humanitarian scientific texts. The analysis was made on the base of those words and phrases which constitute the nuclear parts only. The research is carried out in the framework of cognitive linguistics and is based on constructing semantic fields in combination with the lexical-semantic and cognitive-discursive analysis. It is proved that the composition of the fields differs in structural-grammatical and content relations. The field "Russian mentality" in the nuclear part consists of key lexemes, their list can be made according to different criteria. So, the axiological approach within the secular projection gives the lexemes truth, goodness, beauty, while the axiological approach in the Christian projection gives the triad faith, hope, love. The linguacultural approach results, first, in dyads: the veracity and the truth, fate and freedom, and second, the triads will, courage, heroism and collectivism, collegiality, devotion. The field "European identity" in the nuclear part consists of attributive or object-attributive word combinations with the noun identity as the main or dependent word. The attributive phrases reflect, firstly, the particular aspects of the identity of the peoples and states that make up the European Union, and secondly, the integral aspect of European identity, which is fixed by generic definitions of European. They are specified in two subgroups: "national dimension": post-national, transnational, international, supranational; "state aspect": civil, all-civil, state, constitutional. The integral characteristic of European identity is hybrid and multiple.

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Keywords: Russian mentality, European identity, linguistic mental structures, cognitive linguistics, political linguistics, lexical-semantic field.



1. Introduction

Any supranational state as a civilizational unit is based on those fundamental values that are associated with the concept of “mentality”. The Russian mentality for centuries has provided integrity of the Russian civilization which was put on various state forms: the Russian Empire, the Soviet Union, the Russian Federation and, therefore, the mental basis of Russian civilization should be properly considered not only Russian, but also the Russian state mentality. European civilization after the fall of the Roman Empire was deprived of an integral supranational idea until the end of the twentieth century, when the European Union was created. The necessary condition for the stability of this new supranational state civilizational union is a common mental basis for its constituent countries and peoples. The desired basis of modern European civilization, which has found a supranational design in the form of the European Union, is usually referred to not as the phrase European mentality, but the phrase European identity, the content of which is currently uncertain. The comparison of methods of constructing the content of the concepts of “Russian / Russian state mentality” and “European identity”, designed to fix the mental foundations of Russian and European civilizations, respectively, is relevant in both theoretical and applied aspects.

2. Problem Statement

Russia and Europe: similarities and differences – this is a very generalized naming of the subject area the research belongs to. In a narrower meaning: mental foundations of the Russian and European civilizations which features can be highlighted on the methodological principle “one in a mirror of another”. The initial linguistic objective to catalogue linguistic units for the Russian mentality and European identity is solved in different ways: for the Russian mentality, these are key words, for the European identity, these are key phrases. The reasons for the structural differences in the material are as follows: 1) in the humanitarian tradition for naming the peculiarities of the Russian mentality as an existing fact a well-established set of individual lexemes is used; 2) the characteristics of European identity that does not exist at the present time, but the Pan-European mentality is only being looked for. And it has not found one-word naming in the humanist tradition. Phrases, not separate lexemes for the language fixation of the desired Pan-European mentality are used because at present certain lexemes are already “occupied” in linguistically clichéd representations of the national characters of different European Nations. Compare, for example, stereotypical formulations dating back to I. Kant: The French are seen through vivacity and levity, the Germans are described through thriftiness and prudence, and so on (Kant, 1964).

The specific difficulty to characterise the Russian mentality in a concise way is that there are a lot of prejudices and myths about Russia, Russians and Russian citizens in general. The detailed analysis of this problem is presented in a series of books of the current Minister of Culture of Russia V. R. Medinsky. There the author matches the subtitles with lexically accurately named key concepts of various negative myths: “About Russian drunkenness, laziness and cruelty”, “about Russian democracy, dirt” and “prison of peoples”, “about Russian theft, soul and long-suffering” (the first book of the series: (Medinskii, 2013). The discussion of such myths is not constructive to solve the problem of the main components of the national character, since it is obvious that a great country cannot hold on “bad things”. Therefore, it is

necessary to focus on the “reclamation” aspects of the Russian national character, which are reflected in the exact keywords.

European identity is a phenomenon of individual and social consciousness, which in its projection on an individual appears as perceiving oneself as a European, and in its projection on the European community it appears as awareness of oneself as a peculiar supranational civilization unit within the united Europe (EU countries and peoples). Clarifying the essence of European identity is an urgent objective of a variety of the Humanities, such as psychology, sociology, political science, etc. In this research, the authors consider the issue of European identity from the perspective of cognitive linguistics. From this point of view, European identity is a terminological word combination, which meaning and connotations are determined, firstly, by the meanings and connotations of the two words, secondly, by the "added" meanings and connotations appearing in the phrase as “the effect on the whole”, thirdly, by the discursive meanings appearing from the use of this phrase in different situations and contexts. Identity in the Humanities in relation to an individual is understood as the ability to consider themselves belonging to a community or some communities whose members are united by the features that distinguish them from members of other communities. The identity of a community is understood as a set of features that are specific to that community and that collectively distinguish that community from others. Therefore, European identity should be understood as a set of properties specific to the community, which includes people who are aware of themselves as Europeans. The question of the list of such features that can be interpreted as a “European identity” in an integrated way has no unambiguous solution yet.

3. Research Questions

The problem of Russian national character, Russian mentality and, on the other hand, the issue of the content of the concept of “European identity” has been studied in a wide range of literature. Letting alone its most general characteristics, such as an overview of the history of the issue, see, for example: (Zappettini, 2017; Androsova, 2010). The authors focus on the linguistic components of the problems of Russian mentality and European identity, which in a very brief formulation are as follows: 1) speaking about the Russian mentality, it is searching for lexemes that exist in the Humanities as the names of the main, "nuclear" features of the Russian national character, and what are the meanings and connotations of such lexemes; 2) speaking about the European identity, it is searching for phrases with the reference word identity used in the humanitarian scientific discourse in order to characterize the characteristics of European identity, and what are the meanings and connotations such phrases have.

4. Purpose of the Study

Purpose of the research: 1) on the basis of the selection of existing in humanitarian discourses linguistic means to describe key features, on the one hand, the Russian mentality, on the other hand, European identity, and to reconstruct the lexical-semantic fields that include the corresponding language units; 2) within each of the two reconstructed in this way lexical-semantic fields it is necessary to find their integrated “semantic cores” that are thought to be a concentrated expression of the essence, on the one hand, Russian (Russian state) mentality, on the other hand, European identity; 3) to compare the data.

5. Research Methods

The research is carried out in the framework of cognitive linguistics and is based on the constructing semantic fields in combination with lexical-semantic and cognitive-discursive analysis. The word combinations Russian mentality and European identity are interpreted as descriptors of the semantic fields. From the lexicographical point of view, they are understood as heading units of the materials of dictionary type (for example, the noun identity is interpreted as a potential headword of the dictionary article for lexical units compatibility). The research outline: choosing linguistic units with the required semantics from humanitarian scientific texts about Russian mentality and European identity as a source of discursive material. Then constructing linguistically lexical-semantic fields “Russian mentality” and “European identity”, interpretation of the results of the research.

6. Findings

First issue. About the lexemes naming the main features of the Russian national character. The set of such lexemes and phrases, which are found in humanitarian scientific text is prone to regression into “bad infinity”, because as it covers a significant part of the array of names of ethical and psychological qualities of the man and society. Setting aside the problem of the “pejorative” component, we have to note that the “reclamation” part can be identified, for example, with known from humanistic psychology A. Maslow's “growth needs” (“existential values”, “meta needs”). Compare: *truth, goodness, beauty, vitality, individuality, perfection, necessity, completeness, justice, order, simplicity, completeness, play, ease, self-sufficiency, meaningfulness* (Maslow, 2011). Some important add-on of numerous works investigating the peculiarities of Russian mentality: *the desire for absolute spiritual (the search of absolute good), the veracity, and the truth, conscience, teamwork and collegiality, God (religious commitment, faith) and the fate of the homeland and patriotism, the ability to higher forms of experience, spiritual sensitivity (sincerity, empathy)*, etc. Perhaps the most authoritative work on this issue is the book of the classic of Russian religious philosophy N. O. Lossky “Character of the Russian people”. The title of the first Chapter of this fundamental work (“Religious commitment of the Russian people”) calls *religious commitment* directly as the main feature of the Russian national character (Lossky, 1991).

In opposition to the popular precedent micro texts allegedly reflecting the essence of Russian problems (such as *who is to blame and what to do, fools and roads*), it is advisable to put two groups, so called, “precedent lexical triads” that reflect the real Russian super-values: in the secular projection it is *truth, goodness, beauty*, in the sacred-religious perspective that is based on the patristic Christian tradition they are *faith, hope, love*. These “lexical triads” sound familiar for everybody, but because of the specific national “moral shyness” due to the obvious complementarity of these super-values, they are not often mentioned in the list of the key elements of the Russian “national portrait” - unlike “vodka, matryoshka, herring”, “cucumbers, cabbage, kvass”, “drunkenness, laziness, cruelty” and other Russophobia lexical micro-sets. They cause narrowed and/or biased attitude.

Let us characterize other “lexical keys” to the peculiarities of the Russian national character, which are considered in the Orthodox axiology as a doctrine of the key values of the Christian world outlook (the philological projection of the Orthodox axiology is reflected in our work: (Volkov & Volkova, 2017).

Veracity and truth. The Veracity is of divine nature, and the Truth is of human one. The Veracity is the only one and is incomprehensible to the full extent. The “Truth” is numerous and various. There is the truth of an individual, a social group or peoples, the truth of ethics and law, the truth of science (see more): (Arutyunova, 1999). Understanding the many faces of the Truth is one of the sources of such a national-specific feature of the Russian character as *the readiness to understand a fellow creature*, “acceptance by the heart”. According to the Russian religious thinker, Ilyin (Ilyin, 2002), “together with the right of another person to have the own Truth. In this, according to Dostoevsky, “global responsiveness” of Russians is a psychomental source of centuries-old quiet co-existence of different peoples within Russia as a multinational and multi-confessional state and the geopolitical role (“mission”) of Russia as a peacemaker in the stage of the world history (for more details see, for example: (Vlasov, 2012).

Fate and freedom. Tolerant acceptance of the Russian antinomy: on the one hand, the inevitability of destiny that is what “you cannot escape from”, on the other hand, the gift of Freedom, where the image of godlike man is clearly reflected, the gift of the Creator to his creation. Since the gift of freedom is what one had better not abuse, and, in accordance with the Christian patristic tradition to synergistically correlate/combine their *freedom* with divine Providence, the lexeme freedom is in the context of reflection of the Russian mentality is very inaccurate word. Let us consider one more word that helps to understand the essence of the Russian national character – *will*. As an internal psychomental motive, the Will, mostly ideally is in the easy correlation of people's desires and God's Providence, when the free choice is substituted freely by its absence. It is based on the free acceptance of one's fate and God's care about people. The Russian *unrestricted will* means “to live in God's way, in the free manifestation of one's best”, but not “to live on one's own arbitrariness”. It is not the *arbitrariness* (“what one wants should be done”).

Will, courage, heroism. D. S. Likhachev in his work “Expanses and space” interprets these features of the Russian national character from the point of view of the originality of the Russian geographical space (Likhachev, 2014). Another interpretation: these features are based on the strengthening of consciousness in the truth and “truthfulness”, on the connection of the higher purpose (Destiny) and one's own free will to follow this vaguely guessed purpose. *Will* resulting in the *heroism* as a spiritual *movement* to the God is a synergetic “sum” of the higher destiny and personal free choice, *courage* is in overcoming the fear to follow this choice.

Collectivism, collegiality, “totalitarianism”, *devotion*. “Totalitarianism” when combined with the allegedly inherent Russian “slave psychology”, with the alleged inherent readiness to meekly accept/demolish any state and administrative arbitrariness is one of the most common myths about Russia. The reason is the lack of understanding that *collegiality* and *collectivism* are not only conventional synonyms, but also antonyms to “totalitarianism”. *Collegiality* is based on the Christian sources of Russian national character, in the projection on the daily practice of social and interpersonal interaction it appears as *collectivism*. In Orthodoxy, *collegiality* is interpreted as follows: “The free unity of many people united by love for God and for each other...” (as one of the properties of the Church) (Sklyarevskaya, 2008); in the projection of social and interpersonal practice, collegiality results in the call to sacrificial Devotion ascending to the gospel of John: *To sacrifice oneself for the friends*.

A special place in the line of different versions of the description of the fundamental features of the Russian mentality is occupied by the report of count S.S. Uvarov “on some general principles that can serve

as a guide in the management of the Ministry of national education” that was submitted by him to Emperor Nicholas I on November 19, 1833. Its pathos is in the search of the foundations to allow Russia to stand “in the midst of the general decline of religious and civil institutions in Europe” (Uvarov, 2014). Uvarov's triad has been tried to make fun of for the alleged “conservatism”, “sluggishness” without understanding that *Orthodoxy*, *Autocracy*, *Nationality* are only words, the means of realization of some deep and interior development of the national spirit. And the development can be expressed in other but, in fact, words and synonymous verbal means. There is another understanding of the same concepts - *God*, *tsar* and *Fatherland*. Today's secular society tries to avoid the words *God* and *tsar* and substitute them with other lexical units with the same concepts: *spiritual and moral foundations* of the society, *vertical power structure*, *patriotism* (Volkov & Gladilina, 2014).

Orthodoxy is the civilizational foundation of the Russian mentality. According to the efficient definition, it is Orthodoxy that “gives inner certainty to the mentality of the mass consciousness of the Russian people and determines the spiritual potential of the Russian nation for a millennium” (Orekhovskaya, 2009). Here it is the civilizational function of any world religion. It gives “internal certainty” to all subsequent components of cultural and state construction. From this point of view, the complexity of the search of the definitions of modern “European identity” is in the uncertainty of the religious foundation of European civilization as it has developed by XX–XXI centuries. Uvarov's formula of the Russian mentality includes three basic components both in its initial version and in subsequent modifications within the time frame: 1) spiritual and religious, 2) state, 3) national. These components are considered to be universal. The research of the discursive approaches to the European mentality undertaken by the authors reveals a coincidence only in two parameters – “statehood” and “nationality”. The parameter “religiosity” as well as its modernized definition “spiritual and moral foundations of society” is vague.

The second question. The phrases relating to the concept of “European identity”. The adjective European in the name of the European Union is formed from the noun Europe, which is characterized by a wide range of visual-linguistic and contextual-speech (discursive) meanings and connotations. The core of the meanings and connotations is as follows: Europe is some space with specific geographical, cultural, historical, economic and linguistic boundaries. Ideas about “geographical”, “cultural”, etc. Europe are expressed in the semantics of the adjective European, the noun a European and in various phrases including the adjective European. These meanings and connotations are also reflected in the semantics of the phrase European identity. Its interpretation is as follows: “identity characteristic of Europe (European nations and states), for Europeans. “The language material we use makes up the field of “European identity” is divided into two categories according to structural and grammatical features: 1) phrases such as “adj. + noun. “identity”; 2) phrases such as “noun + noun “identity”. The language material of these categories is further divided into groups reflecting different aspects of European identity.

1. **Phrases such as adj. + noun *identity*** express the attribute relationships (the dependent adjective describes the main word of the phrase identity in any particular context); according to the dependent adjectives semantics the following groups of phrases that name certain aspects of the European identity in its ontological orientation are pointed out. The integral aspect of the European identity is fixed by generic

attributes European / Pan-European and is specified in two subgroups: 1) “the national aspect (in relation to the European identity as a whole)”: post-national, transnational, international, supranational; 2) “state aspect”: civil, all-civil, state, constitutional. The particular aspects of the identity of the peoples and states that make up the European Union: 1) national dimension (in relation to individual European peoples): national, ethnic, “old Europeans” / “new Europeans” / European Nations / national minorities, France / Germany, French people/ Germans / European Nations (peoples), German, French...; 2) political aspect: political, foreign policy, democratic; 3) historical and cultural aspect: historical, cultural; 4) religious aspect: religious / confessional / Christian / Muslim; 5) social aspect: social, group / intra-group / collective, personal, gender /sexual (female / male), youth (young people); 6) geographical aspect: local / local-territorial, regional. The integrated characteristics: ethno-cultural, socio-cultural, ethno-gender, national-state, national-cultural, national-political. The ontological aspects named in the given attributive phrases can be considered as independent subject areas.

2. Collocations of noun + noun *identity* in the genitive case express object-attribute relationships:

1) the semantics of the main word combinations correlates with the individual objectives of the study of identity (epistemic modus); 2) dependent noun identity is the naming of the target object. In the humanitarian discourses related to the objectives of the research of European identity, the following phrases are presented, fixing particular “angles of view” on identity as the object of study: *phenomenon / concept / problem / topic / questions / reflections (about) / study / analysis / aspects / facets / framework / bases / specificity / structure / theory / identity model*. Each of these nouns can be considered as a relative synonym of the concept “purpose” (research of identity), with one or another connotation. The particular tasks of humanitarian research and general scientific concepts correlating with these tasks are reflected in the following phrases: *grounds / factors / indicators / elements / symbols / categories / discourse / principle / criteria... identity*.

Further research of the material of the lexical-semantic field “European identity” is based on the understanding of the field structure and its interpretation as a system whole. The peculiarity of the solution of the interpretation problem is determined by the choice of the elements of the field the “entry point” into the system whole. Let us choose the lexemes problem, history and model (European identity) as “entry points” lexemes problem, history and model (European identity). The essence of the problem of European identity lies, first, in the history, in the historical variability of the identity, and secondly, in the model of identity. The main difficulty of the constructing is in the gap between the existing and the desired.

History (temporal dimension) in the modern discourse of identity is conceptualized as a movement from spontaneously emerging / emerged reasons to the rationally designed grounds. In other words, the foundations of European identity are in time line: history (past), modern times (present), project (future). Variability / stability of identity in time is reflected in word combinations: stable, unchanging / dynamic identity. The foundations of identity are the factors that unite European countries / peoples into an integral unit: history, territory, language, culture, economy. All of these factors are both unifying and divisive. And the fact results in the word combinations: identity games, identity conflicts, (mutual) counter-identity, identity fragmentation, threats / challenges / undermining, defence / rescue / battle for, triumph of (European) identity. Identity changes are related to the concept of “event”, which should be interpreted as

follows: “what happens to (European) identity can / should be happening”. Events that occur with the identity itself vs operations (research, political and other) that the identity experiences are reflected by the following word combinations: crisis / paradoxes / search / metamorphoses / transformation / evolution / pluralization / choice / formation / construction / tendencies of formation... (new) identity.

The model of identity (existing and desired): on the one hand, the reconstruction of the existing “state of affairs”, on the other hand, the project. The available in identity is understood as a resource of social / state development, the project of the desired European identity is considered, on the one hand, as the basis of development, on the other hand it is presented as its purpose. The implementation of the project is the elimination of the gap between the existing and desired. Available: many different identities devoid of the single foundation. The desired is associated with the construction of a single base and is reflected in the phrase new identity. The new identity is understood as an integral unit, within which the integrating aspect of the common European identity is built over the lower levels of private identities. In other words, the new European identity is a “multi-identity”, its graphic metaphor is a pyramid, the lower part of which consists of a set of private identities, the top is the European identity as an integrating unit.

Macro components of the integrating "new identity»: 1. Since the European Union is a civilizational entity uniting a number of different states and peoples connected with Europe, the integrating element is the supranational and trans nationalized identity / citizenship (formal vs. real). 2. Because the identity has the ontological status and has the beingness only in the case when it represents a certain feature of the consciousness of the individual, then its desired psychological result is the consciousness of oneself as an integral member of the new (supranational, trans nationalized) community. 3. The basic values that make up the constitutional basis of the European Union as a new supranational entity.

“New identity” as the top part of the “pyramid of identities”, as the integrating basis of European multi-identity requires to solve the problem of hierarchization of the whole system of identities, to find an appropriate Pan-European identity policy as a practical implementation of the idea of the supranational organization of society. The desired system of identities and the identity policy it causes are displayed by the word combinations hybrid / multiple identity. Its correlation with the previous / current state of affairs is reflected through the word combinations post-national / transnational order in the humanitarian discourse. From the linguistic point of view, the definitions of post-national / transnational are difficult to recognize as successful ones, as they refer to the concept of levelling, “destruction” of the national things. It cannot be considered to be true modern conditions.

7. Conclusion

The question of the content of the concepts of "Russian mentality" and "European identity" in the modern sense, actually, appears as the question about "national idea" – "idea of state" of Russia and Europe. In a more modern alternative recognition, it is a question of the key objectives of civilization and state building. It is reflected in the mental features, on the one hand, of the Russian, on the other hand, of the European peoples.

The "Russian idea" has evolved over the centuries, but its basis has always been religiosity (faith) and patriotism in a specific supranational interpretation of the "preservation of the spiritual foundations of national and state life". The evolution of these foundations was clearly described by Patriarch Kirill of

Moscow and all Russia in January 2015 in his first speech in the lower house of the Russian parliament in the modern Russian history. According to him, each of the most important stages of national history should be correlated with one of the basic values: Ancient Russia is reflected by the sanctity and height of the human spirit and can be identified in one word faith. The subsequent Russian Empire is correlated with "Great power statehood", while the Soviet era is characterised by justice and solidarity and the modern era correlates with freedom and dignity. "A little earlier, at the 15th Council", "explained the Patriarch", we formulated an even broader list of values that underlie the national identity. In addition to these values, there are others: peace, unity, morality, honesty, patriotism, mercy, family, culture, national traditions, human welfare, diligence, self-restraint, sacrifice (Patriarch, 2015). It seems that these formulations sanctified by the high authority should be considered as the basis for the interpretation of the main content of the Russian mentality.

The "European idea" in the modern integrated understanding is the political and economic, supranational and supranational unity. The problem is that unity as such has no independent ontological value. The value of unity is that it can be a means to realize any deeper values. It can be a means only, but not a target. The necessary condition for the existence of the new European (integral) identity is the overcoming of private identities on the basis of their integration into a new system whole. The required integrative basis of the new, common European identity is constructed as a supranational and transnationalized identity. Therefore, the further language ways to characterize this desired identity are nationalism, transnationalism and globalism. These alternatives, from a linguistic point of view, cannot be considered to be efficient. Internationalism as an ideological and political phenomenon in accordance with the secondary meaning of the prefix inter- 'inside / inside', implies the involvement of nations in a special inter-space between them, where (inside of which) the identity of each nation is neutralized. Semantically, the key prefix in the adjective transnational TRANS with the dominant seme "cross/cross" (movement through the external borders of something). The main meaning of the Latin etymon trans 'through, across' is associated with external borders. In the adjective transnational the meaning "through, across" and derivative meaning "further" develop into "non" ("transnational = "non-national"). Internationalism in the contemporary transnationalism and globalism is more radical and is based on the idea of compulsory uniformity and control from a single centre. The term continues to transform further in the no-nonsense issue with the specific subjects of management that make all participants of the process of globalization to obey their decisions absolutely. Thus, it is more appropriate to use the phrases hybrid / multiple identity. The graphic representation of such an identity is a pyramid, the lower part of which consists of a number of private identities and its top is the European supranational and transnationalized civil identity as an integrating whole.

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