

## SCTMG 2020

### International Scientific Conference «Social and Cultural Transformations in the Context of Modern Globalism»

# SPECIFICS OF IMPLEMENTATION OF THE “DER/DIE BEHINDERTE” CONCEPT IN GERMAN LANGUAGE CONSCIOUSNESS

Polina Pavlovna Banman (a)\*, Anna Anatolyevna Legler (b), Tatiana Vitalyevna Matveicheva (c)  
\*Corresponding author

(a) North Caucasian Federal University, 1, Pushkina Street, Stavropol, 355009, Russia, banman.poly@yandex.ru,

(b) North Caucasian Federal University, 1, Pushkina Street, Stavropol, 355009, Russia, anlegler@yandex.ru,

(c) North Caucasian Federal University, 1, Pushkina Street, Stavropol, 355009, Russia, tanyamatveichev@mail.ru

### *Abstract*

This paper analyses the specifics of the implementation of the concept of *der/die Behinderte* (disabled person; person with disabilities) in the linguistic consciousness of native German speakers, examines the problem of modification of semantics and pragmatics of lexical units nominating people with disabilities. Achieving this goal involves the following research steps: based on the distinction between professional and everyday language awareness, analyse the representation of *der/die Behinderte* (and *Mensch(en) mit Behinderung*) lexemes and identify the extent of their significance on the regulatory material as well as the frequency of use of DWDS-Corpus, which reflects the number of lexemes studied in different historical periods of importance for the country. The methodological basis of the research was formed by the provisions on the interrelation and interdependence of language and consciousness, which allow to present the units under study through their verbalization in the language and speech. The main method of scientific research is the descriptive and analytical method, which is supplemented by methods of contextual and text analysis. Analysis of the value of *der/die Behinderte*, *Mensch(en) mit Behinderung* tokens shows the change in the volume of their value accompanied by euphemization. Maintaining a semantic connection with replaceable units (*der/die Invalide*), euphemisms contribute to the correction of the worldview of society and the transformation of its value system. The study shows that the definitions of the lexemes under consideration have been transformed into modernizations in accordance with the socio-cultural realities of the surrounding reality, and that the definitions have been expanded and evaluated.

2357-1330 © 2020 Published by European Publisher.

**Keywords:** Language consciousness, everyday consciousness, political correctness, euphemism.



This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 Unported License, permitting all non-commercial use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

## 1. Introduction

Problems related to the lives of people with disabilities become particularly relevant in modern society, and tolerance towards them is currently one of the socio-cultural vectors of research in the humanitarian paradigm of knowledge. Attention to the chosen topic is conditioned by the peculiar linguistic and pragmatic character of the vocabulary, which refers to the category of persons whose feelings and dignity can be affected by language insensitivity and thus lead to the appearance of communicative conflicts. The study of the declared conceptual sphere is of special interest from the point of view of the all-European values, including human rights, as it helps to understand how the society treated people with disabilities in different historical periods, and provides access to the worldviews, worldviews, and preferences typical for the society in this or that period of its development. It is important to refer to normative legal documents, in which the analyzed vocabulary in its various textual uses can be considered as an indicator of the attitude of society towards people with disabilities.

## 2. Problem Statement

Recently, the specificity of reflecting reality in the language consciousness, which is understood as "a set of mental mechanisms of generation, understanding of speech and keeping the language in the consciousness, i.e. mental mechanisms providing the process of human speech activity", has attracted more and more attention. It is language consciousness, being a kind of cognitive consciousness, that provides the operation of speech. The separation of professional and everyday consciousness is of fundamental importance for our research. Distinguishing these types of consciousness on several grounds, Adonina and Sadretdinova (2005) describe them in particular as follows: professional consciousness is theoretical in nature, is highly specialized, ordered, structured and systematized, and expresses an objective and evaluative attitude. Ordinary consciousness, in turn, is characterized by practical orientation, infinity and multi-dimensionality, lack of clear structure, fragmentation and episodicity, as well as the presence of subjective-evaluation attitude. For professional consciousness to appear, it is necessary to meet a number of conditions: the existence of a social demand for objective knowledge and the social possibility of identifying specialists capable of responding to this demand, as well as "the accumulation of knowledge, skills, cognitive techniques, methods of symbolic expression, and orientation in public consciousness, which prepare the revolutionary process of emergence and dissemination of a new type of knowledge" (Nalivaiko, 1990, p. 72).

What matters to our work is the study of Boldyrev's (2016) possibility of structuring consciousness with the help of language, which the researcher reduces to three types: "The language model of the physical world, the language model of society and the language model of interpretation of knowledge about the world and society" (p. 36). It is the latter model that makes it possible to identify the possibilities of "conceptualization and categorization of objects and events, evaluative scales and benchmarks, ideals, stereotypes, metaphorical, metonymic, euphemistic models of content transmission, and metalanguage models of the language itself" (Boldyrev, 2016, p. 42). These models contribute to the acquisition of secondary knowledge based on the assessment of already obtained knowledge about the world, and the materials we reviewed fully confirm this position.

Linguistic studies touching upon the problems of modifying semantics and pragmatics of lexical units nominating people with disabilities and recording changes in their status in society at different stages of its development are few (see, for example, the "Linguistic Studies on the Problems of Modifying the Semantics and Pragmatics of Lexical Units Nominating People with Disabilities" section): It should be noted, however, that lexical units indicating the presence of diseases, mental or physical disabilities were considered in different aspects when studying the problems of political correctness and euphemization (Baylinson, 2017; Moskvina, 2007; Palazhchenko, 2004; Radünzel, 2015, 2018; Sinina, 2010; Ter-Minasova, 2004).

### **3. Research Questions**

From our point of view, the most important subject of analysis is the specifics of the implementation of the concept of *der/die Behinderte* in the regulatory documents of the Federal Republic of Germany, as well as in the German language corpus DWDS-Corpus.

### **4. Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the study is to identify the specifics of the implementation of the concept of *der/die Behinderte* in the linguistic consciousness of native German speakers. In order to carry out a comprehensive analysis and identify the scope of meaning in the professional language consciousness, the regulatory documents, namely the legislation of the Federal Republic of Germany, as well as the text of the "Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The use of data from the German language corpus "Das Wortauskunftssystem zur deutschen Sprache in Geschichte und Gegenwart" (DWDS-Corpus) makes it possible to analyze the representation of *der/die Behinderte* and *Mensch(en) mit Behinderung* lexemes and to determine the volume of their values as well as the frequency of use.

### **5. Research Methods**

The research methodology is a complex of complementary methods of modern polyparadigmatic anthropocentrically oriented linguistics. The methodological basis of the research was formed by the provisions on the interrelation and interdependence of language and consciousness, allowing to present the units under study through their verbalization in the language and speech. The main method of scientific research is a descriptive and analytical method that allows to study and systematize theoretical and practical work on the problems of domestic and foreign researchers, which is supplemented by methods of contextual and text analysis.

### **6. Findings**

Addressing the German legislative texts has revealed an important component of the meaning of lexemes that refer to people with disabilities. Section 39 of the Federal Act on the Provision of Social Assistance (in force from 1962 to 2004) defined the circle of persons to whom social assistance was granted, i.e. the meaning of the legal term *der/die Behinderte*: persons with disabilities are nominated

clearly and concisely. As part of this text, to *der/die Behinderte* are relevant: *Körperbehinderte oder von einer Körperbehinderungbedrohte* (persons with limited physical capacity or threatened by the loss of physical capacity), *Blinde oder von Blindheitbedrohte* (blind or threatened by loss of sight), *Personen mit Beeinträchtigung der Hörfähigkeit oder von einer solchen Behinderungbedrohte* (persons with listening difficulties or threatened by hearing loss), *Personen mit Beeinträchtigung der Sprachfähigkeit oder von einer solchen Behinderungbedrohte* (persons with speech disorders or threatened by the loss of speech), *Personen mit schwachentwickelteneistigen Kräften* (persons with intellectual disabilities).

Currently in Germany, the concept of *die Behinderung* (disability; disability) is enshrined in the "Social Code IX": the text uses the concept of "der/die Behinderte" instead of "*der/die Behinderte Mensch(en) mit Behinderungen* (disabled people; people with disabilities), these include *Menschen, die körperliche, seelische, geistige oder Sinnesbeeinträchtigungen haben, die sie in Wechselwirkung mit einstellungs- und umweltbedingten Barrierenandergleichberechtigten Teilhabeander Gesellschaft mit hoher Wahrscheinlichkeit länger als sechs Monatehindern können* (people with physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments who, when interacting with different attitudinal and environmental barriers, are likely to interfere with their equal participation in society for more than six months). This definition clearly demonstrates the intensification and concentration of meaning in the definition of the concept: in addition to physical, mental and intellectual impairments, sensory impairments are also called, and it is also pointed out that people with disabilities are persons who cannot participate equally in life because of the lack of a barrier-free environment. A similar definition is contained in the "Act on Equal Treatment of Persons with Disabilities" adopted in 2002. The definition in the current legislation is more abstract than that of 1962 and does not include a detailed classification of sensory offences.

Ratified by Germany in 2009 "The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities also applies the concept *Mensch(en) mit Behinderungen*: refers to the evolving nature of the term "disability"; a similar definition is provided, with more detailed characteristics of equal participation in society as "full and effective" (volle, wirksame und gleichberechtigte Teilhabeander Gesellschaft).

In the documents analyzed above, reflecting professional consciousness, the concepts that nominate people with disabilities, – *der/die Behinderte*, and also *Mensch(en) mitBehinderungen* (currently used) – function as legal terms and perform not only nominative and signifying functions, but also gnoseological function, i.e. reflect the results of cognition and evolution of language consciousness. We should also pay attention to the generalization of sensory disorders in these legal texts. Analysis shows that terms like *der Blinde* (blind) is not recommended to be used due to the narrowing of the name of a person to a single feature dominating the other qualities of the person as a human being. Let us note the non-statistical and variable nature of this object of language comprehension within the legal framework of the Federal Republic of Germany: the modification of the meaning in the professional language consciousness, which is characterized by systematization and orderliness, is taking place. In this case, the professional linguistic consciousness is a part of the everyday linguistic consciousness and is formed by attracting the experience of the "speaking" collective, the historical development of society and socio-cultural conditions in general.

The next step in our research is to turn to the German language corps «Das Wortauskunftssystem zur deutschen Sprache in Geschichte und Gegenwart» in order to establish the frequency of use of the

above mentioned lexical units and to identify opportunities for the implementation of the concept in everyday language consciousness.

Analysis of lexeme value actualization *der/die Behinderte* shows: the German text archive (1473–1927) has only one case of use in 1896. (first occurrence); in the main building (1900–1999) the frequency of use is 776 context texts; in the main building 21c. (2000–2010) – 140 context texts (*Behinderte*). The peak of utilization is from 2000 to 2009. (frequency indicator 17.03). Having studied the relevant sources, we concluded that the frequency of lexeme use is *der/die Behinderte* is related to a change in the attitude of society towards people with disabilities. It was in the 90s that the concept of *der/die Behinderte* are associated with the difficulties of integration into society of a person with disabilities, and since 2000 the removal of barriers and protection from harm to a person with a mental and physical disability have come to the fore. More revealing are the data from the newspaper corps: since 1946, 10131 contexts of lexeme use have been recorded *der/die Behinderte*. An increase in the number of contexts has been observed since 1963, which is explained by the entry into force of the "Federal Law on the Provision of Social Assistance" in 1962 (*Bundessozialhilfegesetz*), which contains a section on assistance to people with disabilities (*EingliederungshilfefürBehinderte*). In addition, since 1964, the German public organization ZDF has been working on the initiative of the Second German Television (ZDF). «Aktion Sorgenkind» (since 2000 «AktionMensch»), financed by a social lottery and aimed at promoting inclusion as equal participation of all people in society. The peak of the use of the lexeme *der/die Behinderte* is in 1993. (frequency indicator 21.62). The following synonyms of the lexeme are given in the body *der/die Behinderte*: «Mensch mit Behinderung, Person mit Behinderung, behinderte Person, behinderter Mensch, Krüppel» (*Behinderte*).

Let's turn to the most frequent synonym – *Mensch(en) mit Behinderung*, since it is this concept that is currently used as an official term for the nomination of persons with disabilities, but for which there is no separate article in the body under analysis. In the main building (1473–2010) there are only 11 entries, in the newspaper building (1946–2018) this phrase is used 580 times. We believe that such a rather low frequency of use of this phrase, compared to *der/die Behinderte*, is related to the trend towards language savings.

The total number of entries in the above lexical units indicates the importance of the social events evaluated in the corpus texts. The analysis of the data, i.e. the data of the combined main and newspaper corps, allows us to get an idea of the socio-cultural transformations in the German language: a significant increase in the frequency of the use of the lexeme is evident *der/dieBehinderte* and word combinations *Mensch(en) mitBehinderung*, which, firstly, testifies to the characteristic processes of euphemization of the German language within the framework of political correctness, after the refusal to use lexeme *der/die Invalide* (disabled person). Secondly, the idea of constant formation of language consciousness in the process of mastering the language and its improvement in a person "as it replenishes knowledge about the rules and norms of the language, new words, meanings, as the skills of communication in various spheres improve". The conducted research of the German language corps testifies to a pragmatic and socially conditioned modification of the meaning in the direction of its expansion, at the same time it is possible to speak about a change in the volume of meaning and the presence of the axiological component of the meaning of the lexemes considered above. The process of interrelation between the nomination and the

language picture of the world becomes obvious: nominal activity forms the picture of the world, but also the picture of the world influences the nomination.

## 7. Conclusion

Analysis of the scope of the concept *der/die Behinderte* normative and legal documents reveal the reflection of the linguistic consciousness of native German speakers, including its theoretically systematized professional type. The analysis of the German language corpus reflects the implementation of communicative and theoretically unsystematized everyday consciousness. Such a structured approach to the language consciousness allows us to explicate the social potential of the individual, which implies both the assimilation and mastery of the language and the construction of the image of the world in the consciousness (Ulanovich, 2010).

In view of the distinction between conceptual models of disability, namely, medical models that see the causes of disability, and social models that assume that problems are created by a society that does not include persons with disabilities in its life, the concept of *der/die Behinderte* can be classified as limited in scope, but the list of disabling diseases or conditions is open, due to the influence of time, society, historical stage and the associated transformation of language consciousness. In addition, each historical epoch has its own specific imprint on the meaning of words: during the period of National Socialist rule, the ideological component prevailed, and nowadays the axiological component dominates in its moral and ethical dimension. If earlier documents *der/die Behinderte* is interpreted primarily as a person incapable of working for health reasons, in modern sources it is a person with disabilities who cannot participate fully in society not only for health reasons, but also because of the lack of a barrier-free environment.

The history of lexemes that nominate people with disabilities in German shows a high degree of flexibility and adaptability of language and language consciousness to the morals of society, the values of the respective epoch and ideology, as well as the gradual deletion of explicit markers of stigmatization of people with disabilities and the emergence, along with euphemisms that mitigate racial and ethnic discrimination, of euphemisms that exclude discrimination against people with physical and mental disabilities (Sinina, 2010). The conducted brief diachronic analysis testifies to the replacement of politically incorrect lexical units with more neutral ones with blurred semantics and confirms the determinacy of the semantics of lexical units by the pragmatic conditions of their implementation, the significance of the elements of the cultural-historical background, as well as psychological presumptions of the implementation of language semantics (Rezanova et al., 2003).

The functional potential of lexemes that nominate people with disabilities is quite diverse: reflecting the specifics of linguistic consciousness, they perform a cognitive function, reflecting values and attitudes in society, as well as pragmatic, socio-marking, cultural outlook and world-modeling functions, the latter implies the use of ready-made structures depending on the conditions of generation and use. The conceptualization of attitudes towards weaker members of society allows "to diagnose the evaluative attitude in language and speech towards those in need of help and protection, to identify possible ways of correcting social imbalances, and to take these ways into account in the implementation of language policy" (Baylinson, 2017, p. 105).

The analyzed situation on the material of the German language requires further theoretical understanding and practical attention, including the material of the Russian language. The research has a rich potential for further study. Addressing this topic from the point of view of intercultural communication is also seen as necessary, because, while learning the language, it is necessary to master and respect for the other.

## References

- Adonina, L.V., & Sadretdinova, O.S. (2005). Structure of the everyday and scientific consciousness: statement of the problem. *Language and national consciousness*, iss. 7, Voronezh: Origins, pp. 10–20.
- Baylinson, L.S. (2017). Conceptualization of disability in the language consciousness. *News from VGPU*, 9(122), 104–109.
- Boldyrev, N.N. (2016). Language and structure of consciousness. *Cognitive research of language. Personality. Language. Consciousness*, 24, 35–48.
- Moskvin, V.P. (2007). *Euphemisms in the lexical system of modern Russian language*. Moscow: LENAND.
- Nalivaiko, N.V. (1990). *Gnoseological and methodological foundations of scientific activity*. Novosibirsk: Nauka, Siber. Branch.
- Palazhchenko, M.Yu. (2004). *Political correctness in language and cultural traditions* (in English and Russian). (Cand. dissertation). Moscow.
- Radünzel, C. (2015). Bezeichnungen für Menschen mit Behinderungen in russischen Presseberichten über die Paralympics 2014 in Soçi. *Zeitschrift für Slawistik*, 60(1), 45–66.
- Radünzel, C. (2018). Bezeichnungen für Menschen mit Behinderungen in kroatischen und serbischen Presseberichten über die Paralympics 2016 in Rio de Janeiro. *Zeitschrift für Slawistik*, 63(1), 90–110.
- Rezanova, Z.I., Katunin, D.A., & Mishankina, N.A. (2003). Metaphorical modeling in the language picture of the world (to the substantiation of research methods). *Bull. of Tomsk State Univer.*, 277, 164–171.
- Sinina, A.I. (2010). Euphemistic Periphrasis in Modern English-speaking Journalism. *Bull. of Volgograd State Univer., Ser. 2. Linguistics*, 1(11), 151–155.
- Ter-Minasova, S.G. (2004). *Language and intercultural communication*. Moscow: Moscow State Univer. Publ. House.
- Ulanovich, O.I. (2010). Language consciousness: peculiarities of structure in the conditions of bilingualism. *Bull. of Tomsk State Univer. Philol.*, 1(9), 44–51.