Lexico-Semantic Group of Verbs Characterizing Human Behavior as a Fragment of the Linguistic World View

Almira Askhatova Aminova, Alsou Mirzayanovna Aydarova

Kazan Federal University, Kazan, Russia
Corresponding author: aidalmir@yandex.ru

Abstract

The article is devoted to the language and culture interaction. The system and anthropocentric approaches are used as the basis of the study.

On the material of three structurally different languages lexico-semantic group of verbs characterizing human behavior is distinguished. Behavior is understood as the system of observed and subjected to evaluation actions and conducts of a person in the material, intellectual and social aspects of life due to his/her needs as well as his/her cultural and individual characteristics. Lexico-semantic group of verbs characterizing human behavior in the English, Russian and Tatar languages reflects its main characteristics and forms a separate fragment of the linguistic world view, a detailed study of which will contribute to the disclosure of the linguistic evaluation component superimposed on the system of language units.

The authors conclude that each lingocultural society has its own values and stereotypes concerning the behavior of people. The analysis of verbs of behavior in the comparative aspect in terms of the anthropocentric approach will uncover national specifics of the studied linguistic phenomena that will give useful information for cross-cultural communication in terms of the formation of a person’s tolerance.

Keywords: system approach, anthropocentric approach, human behavior, lexical means, lexico-semantic group, verb of behavior.
Introduction

The system approach to the study of reality is one of the fundamental methodological principles of modern science. The system is understood as a set of interrelated and interdependent elements. Language as a system was noted by such outstanding Russian and foreign linguists as F.I. Buslaev, A.A. Potебnya, L.V. Scherba, M. Pokrovsky, Ferdinand de Saussure, L. Hjelmslev and others. The system approach in linguistics is revealed in the system associations of words such as lexico-semantic fields and lexico-semantic groups. Over the last 10-15 years the study of semantic relations and groups of words in the lexical and lexical-semantic systems of the language has significantly advanced: the concept of lexical and lexico-semantic paradigm is being studied, and the method of oppositions is used to determine hallmarks of lexical meanings of words, etc.

At the same time the language is an anthropocentric phenomenon reflecting the world view of its speakers. The anthropocentric approach is realized in the fact that a person becomes a point of reference in the analysis of the phenomena and is involved in this analysis defining its prospects and the ultimate goal [Kubryakova, 1994].

The anthropocentric trend is one of the largest and most influential in the scientific space. For the first time in detail the principle of anthropocentrism was proclaimed in the works by V. von Humboldt according to whom the study of language without a consistent account of the human factor is not appropriate. The real prevalence of the term ‘anthropocentric’ in the modern linguistic discourse was in the works by V.V. Morkovkin, Y.N. Karaulov, E.S. Kubryakova, Y.S. Stepanov and others. An important role in the study of anthropocentrism in a language played the works by scientists of the Kazan linguistic school (A.A. Aminova, E.F. Arsenteva, G.A. Bagautdinova, A.M. Yakhina and others).

Discussion

Human behavior and the ways of its representation by native speakers of different related and unrelated languages have often been the subject of attention of scientists, philosophers, psychologists, sociologists, linguists and others. This article discusses the language units characterizing a person’s behavior in three structurally different languages (English, Russian and Tatar) as a set of elements of the system.

The study of lexico-semantic group of verbs of behavior in structurally different languages makes it necessary to examine the key concept of human behavior.

From the perspective of philosophy behavior is seen as the ability of people to work in the material, intellectual and social life, the behavior is due to both natural and environmental factors. In psychology and pedagogy behavior is often understood as a synonym for activity mediated by language and other symbolic and semantic systems, and its typical forms are knowledge, work, play, communication. Behavior in law has been interpreted as an indirect system of deeds and actions of the subject, designed to meet specific needs. In political science to behavior in addition to actions they attribute words, statements, actions which can be observed, measured, objectively assessed and fixed. In sociology behavior is socially conditioned and is closely related to social programs and values of the person. Ethics examines the behavior according to the moral values since any human behavior can be subjected to moral evaluation.

In cultural studies the behavior is understood as a human reaction to the perception of the surrounding world, which is culturally conditioned. It is the culture that defines our subjective reality. Being aware of the views of other people a person is able to understand their behavior and...
his own behavior. In *semiotics* behavior is seen as a kind of code that contains certain prohibitions and regulations and serves as a system of ethics. Behavioral rules exist as unwritten and written laws and constitute a behavioral sphere of language mentality [Mechkovskaya, 2007].

In *linguistics* the term ‘human behavior’ is close to the universal understanding of the word. The dictionaries [Collins 2009, Evgenyeva 1985-1988, Kuznetsov 2000, Longman 2001, Macmillan 2007] define the concept ‘behavior’ as a set of deeds and actions in relation to the environment, a lifestyle. Behavior has a controlled character; this point of view is expressed by scholars in the field of *psycholinguistics* while studying the relation between language and behavior. In particular it is said that people design their behavior with the understanding of their responsibilities. M. Forrester says that people are guided by the rule that is appropriate in a situation in which they find themselves; they choose whether to follow this rule or not, and are responsible for the consequences of their choice [Forrester, 1996].

Therefore, based on the humanitarian approach to the concept outlined above, the following *basic features of human behavior* can be distinguished:

– behavior is the system of actions and deeds of an individual in the material, intellectual and social lives;
– behavior is controlled and directed to meet specific needs;
– behavior is observable and therefore is subject to evaluation;
– behavior is an indicator of social qualities of a person, his education and the level of culture, values, etc.;
– behavior is culturally determined and is a fragment of linguistic world view.

A person capable of monitoring and analyzing his own behavior and the behavior of others transmits his verbal assessment and the description of other people’s actions through a variety of linguistic units. Researchers of Russian works of art reveal a huge arsenal of linguistic resources capable of describing human behavior. In our material extracted from the literary texts, dictionary entries and corpus materials of the English, Russian and Tatar languages, can be identified a variety of means of representation of human behavior, belonging to different linguistic levels.

Thus, at the *lexical level* are found: a) nouns denoting types of behavior (Eng. behavior, flattery; *Rus.* povedenie, lest’; *Tat.* gamäl, jalagajlyk), as well as the names of individuals (Eng. loafer; *Rus.* lentjaj; *Tat.* jalkau); b) adjectives (Eng. tactless; *Rus.* bestaktnyj; *Tat.* ärzez); c) verbs including the actual verbs of the behavior and verbs of other interrelated lexico-semantic groups , actualizing in the specific context their behavioral meaning (Eng. show off, play up; *Rus.* risovat’sja, kaprizinichat’; *Tat.* ereläñä, kirelänü); d) adverbs (Eng. boastfully; *Rus.* hvastlivö; *Tat.* shapyrynyp;). *The phraseological level* contains phraseological units: Eng. bear a grudge against smb.; *Rus.* derzhat’ kamen’ za pazuhoj, *Tat.* künüldä ker saklau. *The syntactic level* includes free word combinations formed by such models as Adjective + Noun, Verb + Adverb, Verb + Eng. as / *Rus.* kak / *Tat.* kebek + Noun, etc. *The text level* is represented by a combination of multi-level means organically united in the text which make the description of actions and behavior of people more vivid and convincing:

(1) *Eng.* We do not mind people being ‘brainy’ or clever, as long as they do not make a big song-and-dance about it, do not preach or pontificate at us, do not show off and do not take themselves too seriously [Fox, 2004];

(2) *Rus.* Tut razdalsja obshhij smeh i huligany kak-to stushevalis’. To est’ – imela mesto grubost’, naglost’, no starik okazalsja ostrij na jazyk i chto-to protivopostavil jeto naglosti (S. Dovlatov. Blesk i nishheta russkoj literatury) [RNC] / Here was a general laughter and hooligans
somehow kept in the background. That is there was an act of rudeness, arrogance, but the old man turned out to be sharp-tongued, and said something to counter this arrogance;

(3) Tat. Egeten igelekke, avyr çakta häçrak järdämgä tashlanu, zheep töshmäve, üz digänenä ireshergä omtuluy belän ul Shäfkatkä bït òhshagan ide shul (F. Safin. Biek taunyn bashlarynda) [TNC] / The young man much like Shafkat who was kind, always ready to help in difficult situations, never abandoned hope and tried to achieve his aims.

Verbs of behavior constitute the nucleus of the linguistic field of means of description of human behavior.

Results

Verbs of behavior describe a person’s conducts in almost all spheres of life. In particular, the group of verbs of excessively thrifty behavior [LSGRV, 1988] describes a person’s actions in the material sphere: Eng. scrape, screw, skimp; Rus. coll. skarednichat’, skupit’ja, jekonomnichat’; Tat. saranlanu, komsyzlanu, etc. In the contexts such behavior is often accompanied by description of specific actions with some currency (for example, the Russian verb kopit’ ‘save’):

(4) Rus. Skarednichaešh’, starik, den’gu kopish (Ch. Ajtmatov. Belyy parokhod) [RNC] / Old man, you scrape and save money;

(5) Rus. No i sami-to my priuchaemsja shikovat’, barstvovat’ i brosat’ja den’gami ili, naoborot, zataivat’, kopit’ bol’she summy, skopidomnichat’ (D. Furmanov, Chapaev) [RNC] / We ourselves learn to show off, to throw the money around or hide and save large amounts, scrape.

In English, we find examples when the verbs of this subgroup are used in combination with the nouns denoting basic necessities (food, clothing, heating, etc.).

(6) A captain could economize on the equipping and provisioning of his men (Thomson, J. The transformation of medieval England) [BNC];

(7) Do not skimp on food or heating or you may put your life at risk in the winter (Underwood, L. One’s company) [BNC].

In Tatar the verb saranlanu ‘to be greedy’ is often used with nouns denoting verbal communication: Tat. süz ‘a word’, maktau ‘praise’ etc.:

(8) Hatyn da üz çiratynda tänle sülärägä, maktaularga saranlanmadysy (L. Ibrahim-Väldiy. Bush savvayt) [TNC] / The woman in her turn did not spare sweet words and praise.

A small group of verbs describes the behavior of the subject in terms of the intellectual sphere. For instance, foolish, irrational behavior is accentuated by the following verbs: Eng. fool around; Rus., coll. glupit’, durachit’ya, Tat. ‘tlerü’, ‘akylsyzlaný’ etc.:

(9) Eng. He spent the whole afternoon just fooling around [LDCE, 2001];

(10) Rus. Tol’ko teper’ Vladislav ponjal, chto glupit i iz-za svoego jegoizma mozhet poterjat’ luchshego druga [GDRV, 2008] / Only now Vladislav realized that he was stupid and because of his selfishness can lose a best friend;

(11) Rus. Rebjata rezalis’ v karty, vskrikivali azartno, durachilis’, izobrazhaja zajadlyh kartezhnikov [GDRV, 2008] / The boys were playing cards, screamed excitedly, fooling around, acted like avid gamblers;


Conversely, too intellectually complicated behavior is described by Eng. subitize, philosophize; Rus. coll. mudrstvovat’, umnichat’; Tat. ‘akyl satu’ etc.:
(13) I went to all the lectures and they’re easy to go to, because you’re spoon-fed, they do not sit back and they do not philosophize, a lot of it (Thomas, K. Gender and subject in higher education) [BNC];

(14) *Rus.* Starik vazhno proiznes rech’ o tom, chto nuzhno pokorjat’sja i preterpevat’, a ne mudrstvovat’ i ne vozyshhat’ja pregordym umom [GDRV, 2008] / The old man uttered that it is important to submit to and to endure and not to philosophize and show off by your proud mind;

(15) *Rus.* Staryj ded celymi dnjami sidel na skamejke voze doma, zagovarival s prohozhimi, znakomymi i neznakomymi, umnichal [GDRV, 2008] / The old grandfather was all day sitting on the bench near the house, spoke to passers-by, friends and unknown people, philosophized;

(16) *Tat.* Änä televizordan da shulaj söjlilär, gazeta-zhurnallar da gel shunyn turynda akyl sata (H. Shirmän. Mähábbätten songy köne) [TNC] / Both on television and in newspapers journalists are philosophizing about it.

Most verbs describe the features of a person’s behavior in society, for example, the verbs of dishonest behavior: *Eng.* contrive, cheat; *Rus.* moshennichat’, hitrit’; *Tat.* aldau, häjlälää; verbs of irresponsible behavior: *Eng.* loaf, idle; *Rus.* bezdel’ nichat’, lenit’ja; *Tat.* jalkaulanu, irenü; verbs of self-willed behavior: *Eng.* defy, resist; *Rus.* beschinistvovat’, uprjamit’ja; *Tat.* azynu, kireläni and others. The social life reveals the nature of a person, his education, cultural level, beliefs, etc.

Human behavior is dictated by a person’s needs. Consequently, in the semantic structure of the studied verbs occur motives of behavior. For example, the behavior accompanied by the humiliation of dignity (L.M. Vasilyev, 1981) may be motivated by a desire to obtain some benefit:

(17) *Eng.* There’s nothing worse than seeing a man grovel just to keep his job [LDCE, 2001];

(18) *Eng.* Opposition politicians *kow-tow* to those in government (The Economist) [BNC];

(19) *Rus.* Chto by ni delalos’, dekorum dlja sotrudnikov byl ulybat’sja i ugozhdat’, ugozhdat’ i ulybat’ja. Oni i ulybalis’ (V. Golyakhovsky. Russkiy doctor v Amerike) [RNC] / Whatever was done, the decorum of the staff was to smile and please, and please and smile. They smiled;

(20) *Rus.* Chleny sem’i rabolepno *prisluzhivalis’* i smotreli emu [dedushke] v glaza (M. Saltykov-Shchedrin. Poshehonskaya starina) [RNC] / Family members slavishly waited on and watched him [grandfather] in the eye;

(21) *Tat.* Kiräk bulsa – sugysham, kiräk bulsa – kaçaam, kiräk bulsa – aldýjm, kiräk bulsa – jalagajlanam, ä çigennim (F. Sadriev. Bähhetzelär bähete) [TNC] / If necessary I can fight, run away, cheat or fawn, but I will never give up.

In Russian we find examples in which the behavior of the subject acting insincerely is due to the fact that this action is expected because it has become a tradition:

(22) *Rus.* Po zavedennomu eshe pri care Gorohe nepisanomu zakonu, mladshie vospitanniki postupali v usluzhenie starhim, dolzhny byli *ugozhdat*’ im vo vsem, chistit’ sapogi, za chto poluchali pokrovitel’stvo (M. Shishkin. Vsekh ozhidaiet odna noch’) [RNC] / According to ancient traditions young soldiers had to serve the senior ones and please them in everything, clean their boots, for which the young received their patronage;

(23) *Rus.* S detstva ej vnushali, chto zhenshchina – sushhestvo neskol’ko vtorosortnoe, zavisimое, slaboe <…>, i pojetomu ee delo terpet’, smirjat’sja i iskat’ sebe muzha, kotorogo nuzhno holit’ i lelejat’, vsjacheski emu *ugozhdat*’ (V. Valeeva. Skoraya pomoshch’) [RNC] / Since childhood she was taught that a woman is a second-rate, dependent and weak creature <…>, and therefore her duty was to endure, be humble and seek for a husband, whom a woman should cherish and please.
English verb of behavior *assume* is used in contexts where feigned behavior implies the existence of a justifying motive (‘to behave or speak in a way in which you do not usually behave or speak, especially so that you look more confident or feel better’ [LLA, 1997]):

(24) *Assuming* a carefree air, he ran to the end of the spring board and dived into the water [LLA, 1997].

In the following example, the heroine of the story is trying to take an indifferent look to hide her true feelings of shame and fear:

(25) Her love for him now seemed shameful and foolish; she imagined Marjorie saying to him, ‘That silly kid’s crazy about you’ and could almost hear his laughter in her ears. When he had stopped the car to pick her up she had been terrified. But there had been nowhere she could run to, no place to hide. The only thing she could do was to *assume* an air of indifference (Bawden, N. Tortoise by Candlelight) [BNC].

Thus, in this case the subject of behavior has no malicious intent to deceive others.

Verbs of the analyzed group belong to interpretative verbs, i.e. their semantic meanings contain the position of the observer who evaluates the behavior of the subject. The presence of evaluative component in the meaning of the verbs of behavior was expressed by many scientists (L.M. Vasilyev 1981, O.P. Zhdanova 1985, O.M. Isachenko 2000, A.M. Plotnikova 2009 etc.).

The evaluative component presents in the definitions of verbs of behavior:

(26) Eng. *debase oneself* ‘to do something that makes people have less respect for you’ [LDCE, 2001];

(27) Rus. *razgildajnichat’* ‘be a loafer’ in the meaning ‘vesti sebja bezotvetstvenno, byt’ nebrezhnym, razboltannym, neradivym v delah chelovekom’ [LDCE, 2001] / ‘to behave irresponsibly, be careless, become loose, careless in the affairs with men’;

(28) Tat. *masaju* *boast* in the meaning ‘üzen bashkalardan östen kürsätergä tyryshu, ereläni, maktanu’ [EDTL] / ‘to put yourself above others, to boast, to be conceited’.

Most verbs describe the behavior which is negatively assessed by the observer. In the dictionary definitions one can find special markers like Eng. ‘disapproving’, ‘critical’; Rus. ‘prezritel’no’ ‘contemptuously’, ‘neodobritel’no’ ‘disapproving’; Tat. ‘hurlau’ ‘disapproving’. The predominance of negative evaluation arises from the peculiarities of human consciousness, the link of negation and norms. The concept ‘norm’ generates some idealized picture of reality. All negative aspects which can be avoided are eliminated from notions about norm.

Negative evaluative component forms the basis for semantic classification of verbs of behavior. For instance, the authors of the Russian dictionary-reference book distinguish the following subgroups: verbs of unnatural, self-willed, insincere, frivolous, irresponsible, immoral, unceremonious, unbalanced, unfair, excessively thrifty behavior [LSGRV, 1988].

Human behavior comprises an element of culture. In people’s minds it is associated with the notion of the norm of behavior, by which is meant the sample, the standard of conduct that a person is taught in the process of socialization. In the verbs under study the standard s of behavior are often presented by the negative form in the three languages:

Eng. ‘no / not / never + verb of behavior’, etc.:

(29) *Don’t grovel*, it doesn't become you (Anderson, C. The spice of life) [BNC];

(30) *I never mess around* when I’m using machinery of any kind [LLA, 1997].

Rus. ‘ne / nechego + verb of behavior’, etc.:

(31) On nikogda *ne licemeril i ne pritvorjalsja*, ne prisposablivalsja k ljudjam (E. Kazakevitch. Serdce druga) [RNC] / He never pretended to be a hypocrite and did not adapt to people;
(32) Davaj soznawajsja, nechego krutit'sja (K. Sedykh. Dauria) [RNC] / Admit it, you should not cheat.

Tat. ‘Verb of behavior + ma / mä’, etc.: 

(33) Jalkaulykka birelmägändä, küpkä ireshergä häm küp närsägä ölgerä alasyn (R. Hayalieva. Jäshüsmer çagym bulmady) [TNC] / One can do a lot and make a success if one does not idle;

(34) Ul berkemgä dä bujsynmady, kylanmady, vaklanmady. (N. Nähmi. Milli zhanym) [TNC] / He never obeyed anybody, never pretended or trifled away.

Behavior as a component of culture is also studied in cognitive linguistics. In particular, behavior is analyzed as a core concept for the linguistic and conceptual world views. Mechanisms of cognition stored in this concept in the German language were identified by L.I. Grishaeva (1999). Certain patterns of behavior expressed in the mentality of Russian and French cultures were analyzed by S.M. Kravtsov (2008). E.V. Starostina (2004) examined behavior as an associative field, which is a fragment of the language consciousness of a person.

Conclusion

On the whole we can conclude that a person’s behavior is understood as the system of observed and subjected to evaluation actions and conducts of a person in the material, intellectual and social aspects of life due to his/her needs as well as his/her cultural and individual characteristics. Lexico-semantic group of verbs characterizing human behavior in the English, Russian and Tatar languages reflects its main characteristics and forms a separate fragment of the linguistic world view, a detailed study of which will contribute to the disclosure of the linguistic evaluation component superimposed on the system of language units. The analysis of verbs of behavior in the comparative aspect in terms of the anthropocentric approach will uncover national specifics of the studied linguistic phenomena that will give useful information for cross-cultural communication in terms of the formation of a person’s tolerance.

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