# {CARAC TERES}

**Estudios culturales y críticos de la esfera digital**

**Dossier: Current Research Approaches in Humanities through the Eyes of Czech Linguists (2)**

**Dossier: Innovación para el multilingüismo: E-LENGUA**

EDITORIAL

DELIRIO

## Caracteres. Estudios culturales y críticos de la esfera digital

*Caracteres* es una revista académica interdisciplinar y plurilingüe orientada al análisis crítico de la cultura, el pensamiento y la sociedad de la esfera digital. Esta publicación prestará especial atención a las colaboraciones que aporten nuevas perspectivas sobre los ámbitos de estudio que cubre, dentro del espacio de las Humanidades Digitales. Puede consultar las normas de publicación en la web (http://revistacaracteres.net/normativa/).

**Dossier: Innovación para el multilingüismo: E-LENGUA**

**Petición de contribuciones,**

DOSSIER: CURRENT RESEARCH APPROACHES IN
HUMANITIES THROUGH THE EYES OF CZECH LINGUISTS
(2)

Coord. Jan Gregor & Libuše Turinská

# Internet as the Factor of Influence on the Structure of Linguistic Identity of Students of Technical Fields of Study in Comparative Retrospection

## Internet como un factor de influencia sobre la estructura de la personalidad lingüística de los estudiantes de ingeniería en retrospección comparativa

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Resumen:
El artículo trata de la influencia de Internet sobre el pensamiento de los estudiantes contemporáneos y la formación del nivel léxico-semántico (NLS) en la estructura de la personalidad lingüística. Por la retrospección comparativa se presentan elementos lingüísticos del nivel cero del modelo (NLS) de la personalidad lingüística. Los autores del artículo describen la personalidad lingüística como un modelo de tres niveles. Los cambios que transcurren en cada nivel influyen el contenido completo de la personalidad lingüística. Se supone que en los principios del siglo XXI, los estudiantes están bajo la influencia de las tecnologías de información las que se propagan por Internet. El artículo analiza los ejemplos de la investigación de la personalidad lingüística realizada en grupos de los estudiantes universitarios de varios países.

ABSTRACT:

The article deals with the Internet influence on the thinking of today's students and the formation of verbal-semantic level of the language personality structure. In comparative retrospective, linguistic elements of the zero model of language personality are presented. The linguistic personality is interpreted by the authors as a layer model consisting of three levels, each of which changes the effects of the overall content of the given language person. The students are expected to start the 21st century by being inevitably influenced by various electronic technologies, especially the Internet. The research was conducted on particular groups of international students.

PALABRAS CLAVE:

Internet, personalidad lingüística, nivel léxico-semántico, ruso, checo

KEYWORDS:

Internet, language identity, verbal-semantic levels, Russian language, Czech language

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## 1. Introduction

In the process of studying the problems of interaction between the individual and social environment, it is not possible to ignore a significant impact of virtual environment on the formation of both identity and its related features on the formation of linguistic personality. At present, certain Russian linguistics view linguistic personality as a key phenomenon. Since the late 20th century, the term "linguistic personality" has gradually become systematic and most scholars view it as integrating. They see it in terms of a new phase of the development of linguistics and anthropological linguistics (Ivantsova, 2010). The use of this term in many areas of scientific research (e.g. linguistics methodology, psycho-linguistics, stylistics of artistic expression, linguistics and culture studies, communicative linguistics, personology linguistics, and others) proves that there is an extraordinary demand for the research of the so called "Human factor" in the language. There seems to be a greater significance of anthropological perspective in linguistic research as well.

The term "linguistic personality" is beginning to appear in the dictionaries of linguistic terminology and therefore its interpretation is inconsistent in academic publications. The introduction of the term "linguistic personality" is based on the attempts to describe and analyze more accurately the relationships between specific mental processes taking place in the subconscious mind of the individual and the ways of their expression in language and through language. The phrase "linguistic personality" was first used in the work of V. V. Vinogradov on artistic prose (*O khudozhestvennoy Proze*, published in 1930). Psycholinguistics

turned its attention to this concept again within the Eastern European linguistics discourse in the 1980s. A significant progress was achieved in the works of Karaulov, who linked the concept to the issues of current problems of intercultural communication, cognitive approach to language, language and image of the world, etc. (e.g. Karaulov, 1989), Russian language personality and challenges for its examination (1987; 2003; 2007), Russian language and linguistic personality (Karaulov & Chulkina, 2008):

> Linguistic personality – the term refers to two phenomena: 1) Any native speaker of a language, whose perception of the world and achievement of his or her objectives can be constituted and characterized on the base of the texts which he or she has produced, in terms of the use of systematized means of the given language; 2) a comprehensive way to describe language ability of individuals to combine systematized language concept with the functional analysis of texts (...). (Karaulov & Chulkina, 2008: 86)

The development of the "linguistic personality" concept has been, among other things, affected by the confrontation of two methodological approaches in the global psycholinguistics: cognitive and communicative.

> Cognitive psycholinguistics emphasizes the production and reception of speech as an individual mental activity and mental conditions for the use of language (congenital and acquired). […] Communicative psycholinguistics puts emphasis on the social nature of communication, long-term and current influence of situational factors on the use of language. It has numerous connections with sociolinguistics and theory of speech activity. (ESČ, 2002: 363)

Linguistic personality is becoming one of the main concepts in psycholinguistics that

> Studies mainly phenomena that are not accessible to direct observation. The means of it are linguistic expressions (written and spoken texts), which have occurred spontaneously in a natural communication situation, or expressions, which have occurred in experimentally induced situations. (ESČ, 2002: 363)

"The structure of language personality consists of three levels: 1) Verbal-semantic; 2) Lingua-cognitive, or thesaurus (world view); 3) Incentive-pragmatic" (Karaulov & Chulkina, 2008: 7), with lexical vocabulary being one of the linguistic personality characteristics. When analyzed, firstly nomina (further divided into nouns, adjectives, etc.) and verbs (or predicates in a broader sense) are indicated. A certain set of nouns, adjectives and verbs can be subsequently examined as a set of psycholinguistic characteristics of linguistic personality. During the analysis, it is necessary to emphasize the role of grammatical forms and stylistics as well as functional and purposeful understanding of the nature of things (based on individual perception and understanding). Therefore, one can speak about the differences in the functioning of linguistic personalities of an adult or child and about the specifics of formation of their linguistic personalities. The differences in the content of lexical vocabulary and its morphological particularities are probably determined, not only in the course of growth, but also as a consequence of significant historic events, important factors in the life journey of a native speaker or the creation and use of major inventions of science and technology. One of these phenomena, which are an integral part of present era, is the Internet or so called the "Internet environment".

The impact of the Internet on society and individuals has been dealt with in a number of publications that describe the Internet as a means of communication and as a communicative environment as well. (The authors of this paper shall not generate a list of such works that have emerged over the years and have had both scientific and popular nature). In their opinion it is more important to highlight the various aspects of impact of the Internet on a person. For example, the Czech researcher, K. Lepilová, mentions these aspects in her article, "Intercultural Communication in a Multimedia Environment of 'Mobile-mania' and Lack of Reading in Current Generation of Children" (2007), which deals with the issues of intercultural understanding and linguistic information in the process of swift dissemination of knowledge and information. She mentions the significance of conceptual analysis in the explication of the meaning of text in order to understand a concept of the world (Lepilová, 2007: 138). The influence of the Internet reaches as far as the realm of "rules of thinking." The rules have changed and the Internet is now becoming a sort of omniscient "divine" helper who knows absolutely everything and gives the answer to absolutely everything.

## 2. Material and Methodology

Y.N. Karaulov (2008) has indicated three levels in linguistic personality and each of the levels has been gradually developing. The first level is verbal-semantic (VSL), which is characterized by the development of certain set of grammatical units (nouns, adjectives, verbs), possessing various degrees of generalization and concretization in terms of semantics. The second level is linguistic-cognitive, where the elements forming this level are naturally complex and include comprehensive (theoretical or practical -

related to everyday life) concepts and ideas for the expression, which is carried out through a series of first level words, but with a significant targeted descriptive status. The relations between these units have a dependency-coordination nature, i.e. they fundamentally change regarding the first layer. It is possible to organize them into a coherent, strictly assembled hierarchical system that significantly reflects the structure of environment, experienced by linguistic personality. Thesaurus of personality can be an appropriate example of a well-known parallel of this system. The highest level of linguistic personality is a motivational-pragmatic level, which is characterized by developing specific constructs, concepts and strategies. It is extremely individual as well as important for the ontogenetic aspect of language formation of personality to gradually complete each level of the structure, because it determines the hierarchical order of the characteristics of further levels.

The exploration of complex of structural elements of linguistic personality was not the main objective of empirical research of the paper´s authors. First, they focused on the first level of the linguistic personality structure, because they used the most suitable actual conditions. One of the objectives of the research was to describe the major trends (tendencies) and characteristics in the development of language personality of students of technological study programs.

During the examination of the results obtained from the questionnaires filled in by students, it was important to consider the psychological characteristics of the appropriate age category. Most students who participated in the questionnaire were 17-22 years of age (the so-called adolescents). Therefore, the research was based on the principles formulated by L. S. Vygotsky (1996) and A. N. Leontev (2001). The two researchers have focused on this age-group and explained the interconnectedness of the impact of new

education and major types of activities, which are the main characteristics of this age group, and are connected to the development of lexical vocabulary of an individual. Additionally, Vygotsky defines new education as a development of reflection that combines understanding of one's own inner changes of personality and the perception of these changes by other individuals. He pointed out that the development of thinking in this age is crucial for the development of all the processes and functions of personality formation. He also turned attention to the fact that it is usually linked with a transition to new patterns of behaviour. These methods can be characterized as a process of control of concept formation combined with an acquisition of the education system, which takes place as a qualitative transition to newer and the highest form of intellectual thinking - conceptual thinking. This process changes both the content and form of thinking.

According to the concept of famous psychologist Jean Piaget, it is characteristic for the period of adolescence to develop thinking on the level of formal operations. This level requires a specific skill to formulate, validate and evaluate hypotheses connected with the outside world, which constantly poses new challenges for the individuals. Such process requires accommodative thinking. Also, Piaget (1994: 76-109) emphasizes the fact that thinking is in a state of imbalance or unstable balance during the formation process. Any new knowledge amends a previous conception, or may cause conflicts.

Students of technology were chosen as the object of research, since the professional focus of their studies assumes problem-solving and selecting, designing and applying of certain new technological and designing procedures. Consequently, the age framework requires active development of analytical and synthesizing activity, formation of basic technical terms or their

"establishment" in the thinking. These terms play an important part in further development of professional thinking and this situation should obviously cause a development of productivity of thinking. The importance of productivity as a mechanism for the development of various types of thinking has been emphasized by many psychologists, including S. Rubinstein (1999). The independent producing of separate objectives and ways of their achieving is a basis for control of system of productive activities. Such activities consequently cause qualitative changes in mental activity. Undoubtedly, these mental and psychological characteristics of adolescent age presupposes an existence of formed linguistic personality, i.e. a certain diversity in lexical vocabulary, which must include nouns as semantic naming, verbs as functional characteristics and nouns as qualitative characteristics of things, events and actions (Artamonov, 2009).

In this context, the paper develops a comparative retrospection as an attempt to carry out a diachronic comparison of two structures of certain verbal-semantic level of linguistic personality in various historic stages of society development. In the first case, it is the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries, in the second case the beginning of the 21st century. In doing so, the authors assume that the Internet environment is a factor that influences and can change the lexical structure of verbal-semantic level of linguistic personality.

When turning attention back to the structure of language personality, it is necessary to note that it is formed in an isomorphic manner in the imagination at each of three levels (Karaulov, 2003). It emerges from specific typological elements: a) units of appropriate level, b) the relationships between them, c) their stereotypical connections, specific complexes characteristic for each level. This isomorphism can be even characterized by a selection of nouns, adjectives and verbs. Separate words have a

function of a unit on the verbal-semantic level. The relations between them underpin all their diversity of grammatical-paradigmatic, syntactic-semantic and associative relationships, whereby the most frequent, standard phrases, bare sentences and finished formulations function as stereotypes. Within the linguistic-cognitive (thesaurus) level it is possible, as mentioned above, to investigate generic (theoretical or general) terms, great concepts and ideas as units. The relationships between these entities are basically already in a process of change, so it is possible to arrange them in a hierarchical system according to (remote) analogy with thesaurus. Stable standard relations between descriptors, which are expressed in generalized statements, definitions, aphorisms, winged expressions, proverbs and adages occur as stereotypes at this level.

This brief characteristic of the two lower levels of language personality, designed by Y.N. Karaulov, explains the meaning of his statement that

> The linguistic personality itself does not begin at the verbal-semantic level, but at the lingua-cognitive (thesaurus) level, because only this level possibly shows an individual choice, personal preference of one concept over the other one and admits conferment of the (major) status to more significant concept in the subjective hierarchy of values. (Karaulov, 2003: 52-53)

However, it is important to consider the characteristics and peculiarities of the verbal-semantic level development as the basis for the lingua-cognitive level formation. The former level is taken by each language personality for granted and

> Any individual creative potencies of personality, which are expressed through creation of new words, originality in associations and non-

standard phrases, are not able to change this genetically and statistically justifiable commonplace. (Karaulov, 2003: 52-53)

Individuality, or personal subjectivity, may be expressed by the means of hierarchy of concepts, whereby only partially, merely in the ways of their relocation and creation of contradictions (when formulating a problem) or in the ways of their joining together (while preparing conclusions), i.e. at the thesaurus level, but a lexical characteristic of the verbal-semantic level plays the role of genetically and statistically justifiable reality here.

In the late 19th century, the author of *The Psychology of Childhood* (1899), Frederick Tracy, had already analysed the development of child's thinking, with the child's speech being the development indicator. The children perceived everything that was working and moving as living, but regarded as distant the world of static objects and were thrilled by the intuition of life in general and the soulfulness of the world. Therefore, an intensification of the verb function occurs in the child's speech and nouns are seen as mere semantic characters, or naming things, but the verbs open their substance. As a result, the use of verbs was twice more frequent and the deverbative nouns eight to times more frequent than by the adults. In his work Fr. Tracy compiled a comparative table of using different word classes (Tab. 1)

| Word classes | Percentage (%) for toddlers | Percentage (%) for adults |
|---|---|---|
| Adjectives | 9 | 22 |
| Nouns | 60 | 60 |
| Verbs | 20 | 11 |

Tab. 1 Percentage of using different word classes by toddlers (aged 19-28 months) and adults at the end of the 19th century (Fr. Tracy, 1893)

K. Chukovskiy, who commented on the research of Fr. Tracy, remarked that "this table would be much closer to the truth" if it also contained the so-called hidden verbs,

> because a two-year old child´s speech includes 50% to 60% of the hidden and actual verbs and nine times less adjectives. Apparently, the mistake made by Fr. Tracy is that he perceived the grammatical categories too formally. However, the general conclusions are justified: ideas which play the most important role in the brain of a child, and which the child most frequently expresses through words, are the ideas of acts, movements, but not the states, qualities and characteristics. (K. Chukovskiy, 2001: 636-638) (Tab. 2)

| Word classes | Percentage (%) for children (aged 2-5 years) |
|---|---|
| Adjectives | 7 |
| Nouns | 20 |
| Nouns with the characteristics of verbs (or derived from verbs) | 53 |
| Verbs | 20 |

Tab. 2 Percentage comparison of using different word classes by children (aged 2-5 years) by K. Chukovskiy (20th century).

Thus, it may be said that there is an underlying developmental tendency related to age, the so-called Psychogenetic retrospection (i.e. terminology of the paper´s authors) of the language personality structure. In the early childhood (from age 1 to age 5), the following set of elements of the verbal-semantic level (VSL) may be observed: predominance of nouns (60%) and verbs (20%) with an apparent and very weak representation of adjectives (9%), according to Fr. Tracy (Tab. 1); to further clarify and based on Chukovskiy, nouns with a purely nominative function account for

20%, nouns with the characteristics of verbs (or derived from verbs) - 53%, verbs - 20%, adjectives - 7% (Tab. 2). Upon reaching the age of 17-20, the VSL set of elements changes: the number of verbs reduces, but the number of adjectives increases, i.e. 11% and 22% (Tracy) (Tab. 1).

The authors also made a comparison of the language personality structure of adults in different social contexts (socio-historical retrospection, i.e. terminology of the paper´s authors), where they observed a tendency characteristic for the change of the verbal-semantic level (VSL) under the influence of the Internet environment. Here, the VSL elements of adults obtained in different time periods were explored: at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries (according to Tracy) and at the beginning of the 21st century (according to the paper´s authors). The comparative analysis encompassed materials of an empirical research, which the authors conducted on a sample of 70 male and female students (aged 17 to 20) of technical fields of study at the Czech and Ukrainian institutes of tertiary education. The Czech Republic was represented by the Institute of Technology and Business in České Budějovice, where 35 individuals (aged 19 to 20) took part in the research (SCZ). In Ukraine, the research was conducted on a sample of 35 individuals (aged 17-19) of the Kremenchuk Mykhailo Ostrohradskyi National University (SUKR).

First, the students completed descriptive questionnaires that were to examine the level of interaction with the Internet environment. The results were as follows: 100% of the respondents (35 students from the Czech Republic and 35 students from Ukraine) use information sources on the Internet, 100% of respondents (35 students from the Czech Republic and 35 students from Ukraine) regularly use social networks, 62.8% of students from the Czech Republic (22 students) and 51.4% of Ukrainian

students (17 students) use thematic forums or blogs of professional character.

Then, an analysis of verbal productivity of students was carried out using the evaluation methodology of development of thinking (or Axio-cognitive assessment of thinking, i.e. AxiKOM), developed by one of the authors (Kushch, 2008; 2016). Here, in 30 minutes the students' task was to write as many words (no less than 300) as possible, which would not be associated with each other, and these words should only include nouns (except proper nouns), adjectives and verbs.

## 3. Results and Discussion

The performed empirical research became an impetus for analysing the linguistic culture of Internet communication sources listed by the students in the given questionnaires. The age and gender structures were approximately the same, with 30 out of 35 Czech students being male and 5 of them female and with 32 out of 35 Ukrainian students being male and 3 of them female.

When comparing the results obtained with the results demonstrated by Fr. Tracy, there (Tab. 3) may be observed formation of marginal model (between the adults and children) of using specific words: fewer adjectives than with the adults, but a greater number of verbs.

| Word classes | Percentage (%) in adult speech | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | 19th century | 21st century | |
| | Adults (according to Tracy) | Czech students (SCZ) | Ukrainian students (SUKR) |
| Adjectives | 22 | 5 | 11,3 |
| Nouns | 60 | 90 | 80,3 |
| Verbs | 11 | 5 | 8,4 |

Tab. 3 Percentage comparison of using word classes by adults in different time periods (the 19th century and the 21st century)

In the social retrospect, the verbal-semantic level of adults changed: the number of a) verbs and b) adjectives decreased – a) from 11% to 5-8,4%, and – b) from 22% to 5-11,3%, but the number of nouns grew significantly - from 60% to 90-80,3%. Also, it is possible to observe a certain differentiation based on the gender factor (see Tab. 4, 5, 6).

| Word classes | Percentage (%) in adult speech | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Total | | | Males | | Females | |
| | Adults (according to Tracy) | SCZ in total | SUKR in total | SCZ | SUKR | SCZ | SUKR |
| Adjectives | 22 | 5 | 11,3 | 4,4 | 11,3 | 9,1 | 11,2 |
| Nouns | 60 | 90 | 80,3 | 91,3 | 79,9 | 81,9 | 85,4 |
| Verbs | 11 | 5 | 8,4 | 4,3 | 8,8 | 8,9 | 3,4 |

Tab. 4 Percentage comparison of using word classes by adults in different time periods (the 19th century and the 21st century) taking account of country and gender

During the research the specifics of the VSL structure of males and females between the Czech (see Tab. 5), and the Ukrainian students (Tab. 6) were separately analysed.

| Word classes | In the lexicon of the Czech students, n=35 | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Total (%) | Males (%), (n=30) | Females (%), (n=5) |
| Adjectives | 5 | 4,4 | 9,1 |
| Nouns | 90 | 91,3 | 81,9 |
| Verbs | 5 | 4,3 | 8,9 |

Tab. 5 Percentage comparison of using word classes by adults within the group of Czech students regarding the gender aspect

Within the group of Czech students, the number of nouns did not differ much between the males and the females (91,3% and 81,9%), but the difference in adjectives and verbs was double, with the adjectives being used twice as much by the females than the males (9,1> 4,4) and the same trend being with the verbs (8,9> 4,3).

| | In the lexicon of the Ukrainian students, n=35 | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Word classes | Total (%) | Males (%), (n=32) | Females (%), (n=3) |
| Adjectives | 11,3 | 11,3 | 11,2 |
| Nouns | 80,3 | 79,9 | 85,4 |
| Verbs | 8,4 | 8,8 | 3,4 |

Tab. 6 Percentage comparison of using word classes by adults within the group of Ukrainian students regarding the gender aspect

Within the group of Ukrainian students, again the number of nouns was not very different between the males and the females (79,9% and 85,4%), similarly to adjectives (11,3% and 11,2%). Verbs were used two and a half more by the males than the females (8,8% > 3,4%).

In addition to the statistical analysis of using the basic word classes, their content analysis was conducted as well. The analysis of the students' lexical productivity indicated the use of mainly monosemantic nouns and a small amount of ambiguous words. Vocabulary denoting an abstract concept, action, attitudes, etc., occurred very rarely. As for the adjectives, the qualitative ones prevail, whilst the clear majority of verbs are characterized by simple physical operations. There was also discovered a low number of words indicating a status and the status change, a characteristic or a flag. It may be stated that the analysis of lexicon and using its means by the above students all point to an unfinished formation of linguistic personality.

## 4. Conclusion

The performed analysis confirmed the importance of discussing the specifics of the verbal-semantic level (VSL) development of language personalities of the students with technical specialization. Their way of thinking became a partial source of the research, since the professional direction of their study activities supposes a certain response to problematic situations and finding or constructing a specific, often completely new, technological or structural progress when adoption decisions. Thus, this period of personal development includes the development of analytical and synthesizing activities, formation of specific concepts that play an important role in the further development of professional thinking and, as a result, particularly shaping the structure of language personality and its verbally-semantic level.

The comparative review also specified the parameters of psychogenetic and socio-historical aspects. The psychogenetic

retrospection allowed to formulate a particular structure model of the verbal-semantic level of language personality and its development in the age aspect (comparison of the language structures for children and adults). The social retrospection enabled to compare the modern form of the verbal-semantic level of language personality with the model established at the turn of the 19th and the 20th centuries and to determine the development trend (tendency).

The students of technical fields of study, who represent different social models in different countries (the Czech Republic and Ukraine), stand at the marginal level (between child and adult) in the VSL structure of linguistic personality: a smaller number of adjectives and verbs than by the adults and an increased number of nouns. The internet environment acts as the factor that limits development of multi-level structure of language personality and contributes to simplification of the vocabulary used, which in turn leads to schematization of thinking and blocks the processes of functional productivity of thought.

Indeed, the research does not cover the full scope of issues of the linguistic personality structure, but the revealed tendencies may serve as a certain impetus to conduct further experiments. Another perspective appears to be to continue examination of other levels of language personality of (not only) the students of technical fields. The proposed cross-cultural analysis of the problem may also be used in other researches.

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Estudios culturales y críticos de la esfera digital

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