CULTURE CODE IN HUMANITARIAN DISCOURSE: SOCIO-CULTURAL ASPECT

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INTRODUCTION

The category of code is widely used not only in semiotics, but also in other humanitarian disciplines and is significantly promising. French philosopher and cultural theorist Michel Foucault notes that the fundamental codes of any culture play a key role in a person’s life and determine “the empirical orders with which he will be dealing and within which he will be at home” (FOUCAULT, 1977, p. 37). Despite different approaches to the classification and interpretation of the ontological status and to the culture code functioning, scholars agree that the culture code is a part of the cultural process, its semantic core, rather than a description of a cultural phenomenon per se.

The relevance of understanding and interpreting culture codes is determined by the necessity of arranging, classifying, and analyzing the code systems. The decryption of the culture codes and the reconstruction of the corresponding historical and cultural contexts are vital tasks not only for culturology, but also for other humanities. The study of culture codes is regarded as one of the basic means for understanding the mentality and value orientations of both any particular individual and the “cosmo-psycho-logos” of any ethnic group (GACHEV, 1995).

LITERATURE REVIEW

In modern humanitarian discourse, the term “culture code” has become quite widely used. In addition, this concept remains multidimensional, which is due to a wide range of issues, which can be considered in the context of “culture coding.” Besides, each of the areas of humanitarian knowledge considers this phenomenon through the lens of a particular science (CARBAUGH, 2007; COYLE, 2018; DEMENTE, 2004; KOBAYASHI, 2009; COBLEY, 2016; CHEN; GOTTI; KANG, 2018). Humanities borrowed the term “code” (codex means a set of laws, Latin) from the information theory and computer science.

The Large Explanatory Dictionary of the Cultural Studies defines the culture code as “the key for understanding the type of culture (pre-written, written, screen periods), “a set of signs (symbols), meanings (their combinations), which any subject of a human’s material or spiritual activity contains” (KONONENKO, 2003). The Postmodernism Encyclopedia interprets “code” as “a concept which is widely used in semiotics, and which allows revealing the mechanism of the message meaning generation” (GRITSANOV, MOZHEIKO, 2001). The understanding of the culture code as a “meanings generator” is revealed in the works of Lotman, Foucault, and Eco. Italian philosopher Umberto Eco analyzed the ideas of semiotics founders, namely, de Saussure (2011), Elmslev (1959), Barthes (1973), and Peirce (2000), and developed a semiotic concept of culture, i.e., “a universe of signs” (2004, p. 83). Eco claimed that code is “a system that establishes the following concepts: 1) a repertoire of the opposites; 2) the rules for their combination; and 3) occasionally one-to-one correspondence of each symbol to a certain signified one” (ECO, 2004; p. 7).

Lotman, one of the founders of the modern semiotics and structural semiotic literary criticism, developed the concept of culture as a semiosphere in his work Inside the Thinking Worlds, which was first published in London in 1990. Semiosphere is a semiotic space, which is a process of generation, functioning, interpretation, and processing of the cultural texts. It is “the result and the condition for development of culture” (LOTMAN, 1999, p. 166). It is necessary not to consider a separate language as a unit of semiosis, but the whole semiotic space of the culture in question (LOTMAN, 1999, p. 164).

Lotman interprets semiosphere as “a synchronous semiotic space that fills the boundaries of culture and is a condition for the work of separate semiotic structures and, at the same time, their generation” (LOTMAN, 1999, p. 4). The author regards codes, “constantly renewing in the


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entire space of semiosis”, as tools for the interpretation and “decryption” of the cultural texts (LOTMAN, 1999, p. 165).

The term “code” is widely used not only in semiotics, but also in other humanities, such as culturology, psychology, sociology, cognitive linguistics, psycholinguistics, ethnology, and philosophical anthropology (SIMKO; OLICK, 2020; DOCTOROFF, 2011; MAY; CHAPLIN, 2008; NORTON, 2019; BEJAR, 2014; SPICHEVA; POLYANSKAYA, 2020; MERRELL, 2017). In the context of the linguo-culturology, researchers are focused on the study and description of the culture codes implementation in the figurative system of the language in terms of its culture codes translation (GUDKOV, 2004; GUREVICH; IZOTOVA, 2019; KRASNYKH, 2003; MASLOVA; PIMENOVA, 2016; AVANESOVA; KUPTSOVA, 2015; SIMBIRTSEVA, 2016).

Berezovich defines the culture code as “the concept of the culture language paradigmatics”, which is introduced “not only by certain lexical groups, but also by related folklore texts, beliefs, etc.” (BEREZOVICH, 2007, p. 15). Some researchers emphasize that “the space of culture codes is full of archetypical beliefs, which reflect collective psychology, defining people’s actions, goals and the results of their activities” (MASLOVA; PIMENOVA, 2016, p. 24).

Culture codes are universal by nature, although they are determined by a subjective (traditional ethnic) factor. Therefore, the coding of a cultural space always has national characteristics and is specific for each ethnic group (KRASNYKH, 2002, p. 232). The results of the literature review showed the growing scientific interest in the issue of cultural coding, and its multifaceted development. However, the issue of the identification and classification of the culture codes as axiological components of any culture is not sufficiently developed. Therefore, comprehensive study and research systematization in this area must be continued.

MATERIALS AND METHODS
The research methodology is based on several approaches:

1. General philosophical approach, which contributes to the understanding of the object ontology.
2. Axiological approach, which allows us to establish value attitude of a person to his/her existence and the surrounding world through the studied concept.
3. Typological approach, which allows us to determine the characteristic features of a culture.
4. Functional approach, which explores the functions and forms of a culture. This approach considers each culture as an internally all-sufficient holistic system consisting of functionally interconnected components.

The following research methods were applied: conceptual analysis, component and comparative analyses, interdisciplinary synthesis, sociocultural approach, and the method of cognitive interpretation. The material for the study is represented by a wide spectrum of sources, namely, literary, religious, historical, philosophical, cultural, linguistic, psychological, and popular scientific texts.

RESULTS
Culture code is the basis for the world conceptualization and is part of the cultural process, which allows a description of the dynamics of the cultural development within the framework of the correlation between traditions and innovations. Phenomena and events with a certain symbolic significance can be considered as a code, namely, objects of material and spiritual culture, realities of the surrounding world (such as flora, fauna, national cuisine), cultural practices (such as ceremonies, festivals, holidays, sports competitions and games), norms of behavior and stereotypes, precedent texts, paroemias, and phraseological units.

Considering the history of the understanding the culture code concept in humanitarian discourse, we can conclude that despite the wide use of the term, no unambiguous understanding and clear definition exist. The main functions of a culture code are to associate a sign with a meaning and to translate and interpret the world of nomination into a world of meanings. Code is the basis of communication, providing a way for transmitting any type of
message. Every culture contains a strict hierarchy of codes, which is an open, universal, and all-sufficient system for modeling a picture of the world although constantly changing and without rigid boundaries system. Code is the key for decoding the deep cultural phenomena and stereotypes of behavior and values, which are determined by ethno-culture.

According to the above studies, it is relevant to define a culture code as a value matrix that includes culture constants, which is a tool for correlating the information with certain signs (symbols), which contributes to the transition from notion to meaning to the objectification of subjective meaning. We regard universality, system-forming, regulatory functions, and the capability to acquire new meanings as the basic typological characteristics of the culture code. Comprehension and interpretation of codes as key characteristics of culture contributes to the comprehensive understanding of the unique characteristics of the nation, which are handed down from generation to generation.

**DISCUSSION**

The term code in semiotics implies the correspondence between the field of expression and the field of the sign content. German philosopher Ernst Cassirer considered “symbolic forms” as instruments for the reality coding, i.e., “not simple copies of an existing reality but the main directions and means for structuring, “organs”, which are rather for “imparting meaning” than for acquiring it (CASSIRER, 2001, p. 221).

Cassirer called a human animal symbolicum and highlighted its inability to deal with the reality without artificial means, i.e., linguistic forms, imageries, mythical symbols, and religious rites. According to Cassirer, the characteristic features of a human life, which determine the progress of human culture, correspond to life and suffering in the “symbolic universe”, i.e., the world of imaginary emotions, fears, illusions, losses and disappointments. Cassirer defined the essence of culture as the ability to create an artificial world, denoting the surrounding reality with certain symbols and signs, which were characterized with “universal adaptability”, “variability” and “mobility” (CASSIRER, 1945). Verbal and other signs in everyday life, science and art do not only convey information, but also fix and preserve socially significant values, which must be broadcasted. According to Eco, “every communicational act is overfilled with socially and historically conditioned codes and depends on them” (ECO, 2004, p. 38). Eco identified several types of codes: codes of perception, codes of recognition, codes of transmission, codes of tones, iconic codes (figures, signs, semes), iconographic codes, codes of taste, rhetorical codes, stylistic codes, and codes of the unconscious.

In addition to the basic denotative meanings established with the code, connotative meanings appear, which are determined through secondary codes, i.e., lexicodes. As a result, communicative codes turn into conventional ones, where a continuous process of denotation, i.e., semiosis, is observed. Eco claimed that the objective of semiology is to describe the codes as the systems of expectations, and “to outline the corresponding systems of expectations, which are significant in the universe of psychological phenomena and ways of thinking” (ECO, 2004, p. 38). French philosopher and literary critic Robert Barthes identified five basic codes, namely, hermeneutic, proairetic, symbolic, semantic and referential. Barthes regarded the code as a “space of quotation”, a range, where all kinds of cultural “voices” are observed, constituting into the Text (BARTHES, 2001, p. 45).

According to Lotman, “hierarchy of codes” allows us to actualize “different levels of significance” in the semiosphere (LOTMAN, 1999, p. 186). However, no code, no matter how complicated it is hierarchically, can decrypt the entire cultural text. Lotman also declared that the code of the epoch is not a unique, but a prevailing cipher. Thus, he identified dominant, supplementary, subordinate, compatible and incompatible codes. The compatibility of cultural codes ensures the success of intercultural communication. In addition, the author noted “If cultural contacts contribute to the combination of two compatible hierarchies of codes, then a new cultural type appears. If two incompatible codes collide, their mutual destruction occurs, i.e., culture loses its language” (LOTMAN, 2002, p. 59).

Soviet linguist and psychologist Zhinkin developed the concept of Universal Subject Code (USC) as the basic component of thinking that exists in the human mind. According Zhinkin, this non-verbal code has no relation to a language as a system of signs, as it is formed in the
consciousness of each person in the process of sensory perception of the surrounding reality. The USC is a language of schemes and visual images, which are formed in the human mind as a result of sensory perception, intonations echoes, and words, i.e., everything that is captured in the memory. Human thinking is performed by means of these images. The USC provides a denotative reflection of the reality, and a semiotic transformation of sensory signals into an subject structure.

Zhinkin regarded the USC as “the language of intellect,” a tool for translating thoughts into the language of a person: “The intellect, for which the message is intended, does not understand natural language. It has its own informational language, in which it develops hypotheses, proofs, draws conclusions, and makes decisions, etc. (ZHINKIN, 1982, p. 18). Therefore, according to Zhinkin, USC contributes to a transition from a thought to a word, from the code of sensory images to a natural verbal language.

American psychologist Clotaire Rapaille focused on the theory of “imprinting”, i.e., fixing personally significant information in the memory, “a combination of some experience and emotions related”. He defined the culture code as “the unconscious meaning we apply to any given thing - a car, a type of food, a relationship, even a country - via the culture in which we are raised” (RAPAILLE, 2019, p. 13).

According to Rapaille, emotional images captured in childhood can control thinking and determine future actions. “The captured image and code are like a lock and a code to it. If you know the sequence of figures and letters, you can open the lock” (RAPAILLE, 2019, p. 19). Comprehension of emotions and meanings, which culture codes of different nations contain, and their decoding, contributes to the understanding of human behavior and intercultural differences.

In sociology, the concept of culture code is applied for the analysis of social phenomena and processes. Jeffrey Alexander, the author of the Strong Program concept in cultural sociology, investigated culture codes and narratives in various areas of social life. “Thick descriptions” of the codes, narratives and symbols create the textured webs of social meaning” (ALEXANDER, 2013, p. 62).

Culture codes, like living language, are based on signs that contain both the signifier and the signified (ALEXANDER, 2001, p. 92). According to Alexander, social realities are not initially good or bad, sacred or vulgar, democratic or anti-democratic. They acquire certain qualitative, value content only as a result of noting as a process of the reality coding, which ultimately forms the character of social knowledge (KRAVCHENKO, 2016, p. 16).

The issue of culture coding is actively developed in cultural linguistics and ethno-linguistics. Code is a component of culture. According to Tolstoy and Tolstaya, “culture is a hierarchically organized system of different codes, i.e., secondary sign systems use various formal and material means for coding the same content, resulting, in general, in a “world picture”, the worldview of a particular social community” (TOLSTOY; TOLSTAYA, 1995, p. 7).

Telia interpreted the culture code as “the taxonomic substrate of its texts. This substrate is a set of cultural ideas about the world picture of any society i.e., the natural objects, artifacts, phenomena, actions and events distinguished in it, metonymy and their spatial-temporal or qualitative and quantitative dimensions” (TElia, 1999, p. 20-21). According to Telia, culture codes are realized, as a rule, in sacred texts, paroemias, metaphors, and phraseological units, since they have a heightened degree of symbolism. It follows from the definition of Krasnykh that cultural code is a bearer of information about the values of linguocultural community. Therefore, cultural codes are a kind of prism through which images of the Russian and German axiological phraseological units are considered.

Krasnykh defined culture code as a “net” that culture “throws” onto the world, divides, categorizes, structures and evaluates it” (KRASNYKH, 2002, p. 232). The codes of culture “set and predetermine the metric-reference sphere participating in the structuration and assessment of the material world” (KRASNYKH, 2004, p. 19). Krasnykh identified six basic codes, namely, somatic, spatial, temporal, subjective, biomorphic, and spiritual; the rest can stand out among them. “Culture code is a universal phenomenon, characterizing a human being as homo sapiens. However, their manifestations, the share of each of them in a particular
culture, as well as the metaphors in which they are realized, are always nationally determined and conditioned by a particular culture” (KRASNYKH, 2003, p. 298).

Gudkov identified codes as secondary semiotic systems (somatic, zoomorphic, natural landscape, etc.). “Certain objects of the world around us, both natural and artifacts, in addition to their direct functions, also acquire a symbolic one, and can acquire some additional meanings” (GUDKOV, 2004, p. 39). Kovshova also identified the system of culture codes with “signs of different substances” (KOVSHOVA, 2013, p. 173). In the verbal culture code, a key role is assigned to phraseological units that originated at the junction point of language and culture in order to describe and evaluate the world through the prism of set - mages and value orientations (KOVSHOVA, 2013, p. 174-175).

Codes are actualized not only in linguistic texts, but also in other cultural phenomena, including artifacts. Maslova and Pimenova interpreted the culture code as a taxonomy of “the elements of the world picture, which combines natural and human-made objects (biofacts and artifacts), objects of the inner and outer worlds, i.e., physical and mental phenomena” (MASLOVA; PIMENOVA, 2016, p. 16), “a set of social memory methods, a set of values and rules for the game of collective coexistence, a system of normative and evaluative criteria developed by people” (MASLOVA; PIMENOVA, 2016, p. 3).

Simbirtseva defined the culture code as “a set of signs and their combinations within a historical and cultural period, which has received verbal and / or non-verbal implementation in cultural texts, which has interpretive stability in the space-time continuum and retains the communicative potential in terms of personal perception and social cultural practices” (SIMBIRTSEVA, 2016, p. 157). Zubko defined a code as a “core”, “an initial sign structure, a matrix containing all the components of the national culture paradigm and behavior in their unmanifested form” (ZUBKO, 2004, p. 10).

Avanesova and Kuptsova, who investigated the essence of culture codes and their functional role in cultural practice, emphasized that codes in culture comprise “a structured set of interrelated prescriptions, standards, restrictions and attitudes in relation to different types of activity, i.e., communicative, transformative and technological, semantic, axiological, cognitive, aesthetic, etc., the central element of which is a set of signs and symbols, combinations and meanings.” According to the authors, the culture code is self-sufficient, although it is open for changes, and the introduction of new secondary culture codes. The development of culture codes takes a long period of time (AVANESOVA; KUPTSOVA, 2015, p. 35).

Depending on the means of the cultural language, more than a dozen of codes are distinguished, namely, natural, anthropic, somatic, artifact, zoomorphic, plant, spatial, temporal, subject, food, religious, etc. (GUDKOV, 2004, p. 96-99). Savitsky, who focused on the essence, composition, and functioning of culture codes in communication, rightly emphasizes the versatility of the phenomenon, its regulatory, semiotic, cultural and cognitive aspects. In the context of the investigation of the figurative code concept, the scientist interprets it as a system of normative images developed through communication, which are included in ethno-culture and serve as signs of the reality fragments. Savitsky claimed that any sphere of reality perceived by the senses could perform the function of a culture code (SAVITSKY, 2019, p. 72).

CONCLUSION

The term culture code is one of the key concepts of culturology, which allows us to understand the role and functional mechanisms of the culture, and the ways of its self-regulation. A brief review of the socio-cultural functioning of the Code concept in humanitarian discourse introduced not only different approaches to its definition and understanding, but also the semantic load and functional mobility of this notional concept due to its complexity and multidimensionality.

The culture code is universal; it exists in all historical epochs. Interpretation of the origin and structure of the culture codes, the analysis of the mechanisms of influence on the individuals’ behavior contribute to a significant impact on the understanding of the cultural process patterns in terms of their genesis and development prospects. Further comprehensive study of the culture code semantics as a special communication means, as well as a way of storing
and transmitting information and historical memory, seems to be promising. The theoretical significance of the research is determined by the results of the comprehensive description of the culture codes, which can be of interest for further scientific research in the field of culturology, and contribute to a deeper understanding of the mental entities’ essence.

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**Resumo**

O interesse dos pesquisadores pela identificação e estudo dos códigos e a ausência de sua lista final determinam a relevância. O objetivo é analisar as principais abordagens de leitura e interpretação do conceito de “código de cultura” em uma série de disciplinas humanitárias, para identificar suas características comuns e distintivas. O artigo descreve resumidamente as principais definições do código de cultura em semiótica, que considera a cultura como um sistema de signos, analisa algumas definições desse conceito e sua classificação na interpretação de diferentes autores. A experiência de consideração dos códigos culturais e sua atualização no contexto da linguística cultural e etnolingüística são generalizadas. Os resultados comprovaram o caráter multidimensional e a mobilidade funcional desse conceito nocional. Verificou-se que as principais características do código de cultura são as capacidades comunicativas, a capacidade de captar e transmitir o conteúdo de valores e significados de forma concentrada.


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**Abstract**

The interest of researchers in the identification and study of codes, and the absence of their final list determine the relevance. The purpose is to analyze the main approaches to reading and interpreting the concept of “culture code” in a number of humanitarian disciplines, to identify their common and distinctive features. The article briefly describes main definitions of the culture code in semiotics, which considers culture as a sign system, analyzes some definitions of this concept and its classification in the interpretation of different authors. The experience of cultural codes’ consideration and their actualization in the context of cultural linguistics and ethnolinguistics are generalized. The results proved the multidimensional character and functional mobility of this notion concept. It was found that the main characteristics of the culture code are communicative capabilities, the ability to capture and transmit the content of values and meanings in a concentrated form.

**Keywords:** Culture code. Sign. Symbol. Semiotics. Humanities.

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**Resumen**

El interés de los investigadores en la identificación y estudio de códigos, y la ausencia de su lista final, determinan la relevancia. El propósito es analizar los principales enfoques para leer e interpretar el concepto de “código cultural” en una serie de disciplinas humanitarias, para identificar sus características comunes y distintivas. El artículo describe brevemente las principales definiciones del código de cultura en semiótica, que considera la cultura como un sistema de signos, analiza algunas definiciones de este concepto y su clasificación en la interpretación de diferentes autores. La experiencia de la consideración de los códigos culturales y su actualización en el contexto de la lingüística cultural y la etnolingüística son generalizadas. Los resultados demostraron el carácter multidimensional y la movilidad funcional de este concepto teórico. Se encontró que las principales características del código cultural son las capacidades comunicativas, la capacidad de captar y transmitir el contenido de valores y significados de forma concentrada.