

The Significance of the Works of I. A. Baudouin De Courtenay for The Development of Sociolinguistics and Linguodidactics

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By

Abstract

I. A. Baudouin de Courtenay was one of the first scholars to point to the social differentiation of Russian at the beginning of the 20th century. It laid the foundation for the sociolinguistic trend in Russian linguistics which began to actively develop in Russia after 1917. Scholars studied the influence of social factors on the language of new newspapers, which were published for the poorest and illiterate population of Soviet Russia. Sociolinguistic research for political reasons ceased in the 30s and resumed in Russia only in the 70s of the 20th century. By the end of the 20th century, the ideas of Baudouin de Courtenay were put to good use not only in linguistics but also in linguodidactics. The use of speech indicators for sociolinguistic description of the language is important in the preparation of textbooks on intercultural communication, as they suggest to students the social status and social role of communicants in the texts. Creating textbooks of a foreign language with consideration for sociolinguistic variables is the task of language education in the 21st century.

Keywords: Sociolinguistics, Linguodidactics, Social Differentiation of Language, Social Dialects,

1. Introduction

I. A. Baudouin de Courtenay is one of the first scholars in Russian linguistics who pointed to the social differentiation of the Russian language, “The variety of languages can be considered in diversion from geographical chronological distinctions from the point of view of social strata as the languages of different ages (children, adults, old people), sexes, estates, classes of society” [1].

These considerations applied by I. A. Baudouin de Courtenay at the beginning of the 20th century were developed by Russian scholars, such as E. D. Polivanov, G. O. Vinokur, M. M. Bakhtin, V. N. Voloshinov, A. M. Selishchev, L. P. Yakubinsky in the 1920s. Then it was relevant to study the influence of social factors on the language in connection with the revolutionary events of 1917, which changed the social structure of Russian society and the stylistic system of the Russian language. The decree on the press of November 9, 1917 destroyed the newspaper system of tsarist Russia. The oldest liberal newspapers, *Русские ведомости* (*Russkiye Vedomosti*), *Русское слово* (*Russkoye Slovo*), *Сын отечества* (*Syn Otechestva*), were closed down as being “hostile to the new government, calling for open resistance and disobedience to the government of workers and peasants; spreading havoc by clearly slanderous jugglery of facts; calling for clearly criminal and penal actions” [2]. Instead of these newspapers, the Central Committee of the RSDLP (b) began to publish the newspapers *Правда* (*Pravda*), *Беднота* (*Bednota*), *Рабочий* (*Rabochy*), *Батрак* (*Batrak*), and

Крестьянская газета (Krestyanskaya Gazeta).

The very names of the newspapers indicate to the target readership of the newspapers. And this is not accidental: more than 80% of the population of Soviet Russia were peasants [3], and in 1920 only 37.8% were literate [4]. Therefore, the authors of the newspapers were desperate for the clarity of the printer's ink.

It was necessary for another system to begin the elimination of illiteracy, on the one hand, and this was undertaken in 1919, and to begin sociological research of readership of different ages and sexes, on the other hand. Scientists studied the newspapers *Язык красноармейца / Yazyk Krasnoarmeitsa* (The Language of the Red Army), *Красный воин / Krasny Voin* (Red Warrior), *Коммунист* (The Communist), *Беднота / Bednota* (The Poor) [17] for the perspicuity of their language to an uneducated reader.

The ideas of I. A. Baudouin de Courtenay that furthered the inception of social linguistics were especially relevant in linguodidactics in the middle of the 20th century, since sociolinguistic information contains information about the belonging of a speaker to a particular social group and time, about the relationship between speakers, about the speaker's culture and his/her social role [6]. This is the very information that forms the communicative competence. Therefore, having taught the official form of addressing the teacher (Nina Ivanovna) already in the first lessons of Russian as a foreign language, we must not only give another variant of this name (Nina), but also note its other sociolinguistic affiliation, tell about the difference in communicative situations in which the first and second variants are used. We should do the same when we greet students (Здравствуйте! (How do you do!), Добрый день (Good afternoon) – these are neutral forms that may be used for any situation; Привет! (Hello!) – a slangy form, it is used when meeting well-known people, peers who do not differ in social standing).

Teaching sociolinguistic variants already at the initial stage of teaching a second language is of great importance, since it helps to assimilate situational “increments of meaning” along with the choice of a or another variant [7].

2. Methods

The main method used in our paper is based on the views of I.A. Baudouin de Courtenet, stated at the end of the 19th century, “Since language is possible only in human society, then, in addition to the mental side, we must always note the social side in it” [8].

In our analysis we proceed from the social differentiation of language recognized by Baudouin de Courtenay and from the influence of social factors on human verbal behavior and on the development of language. These contributions are basic in sociolinguistic science. Therefore, the sociolinguistic analysis of texts is the main method in our paper.

3. Results and Discussion

Studying the social dialects of people who are different in age, place of residence, education and worldview, Russian researchers (Y. Shafir, R. O. Shor, M. Gus, Y. Zagoryansky, N. Kaganovich, etc.) conducted the first in Russia scientific research on social dialectology [9], comparing the language of the materials of worker correspondents and the language of articles written by journalists. In that way the analytical recommendations of linguists for the creation of the style of leading publications (*Правда / Pravda*) and popular newspapers (*Беднота / Res Militaris*, vol.12, n°4 December issue 2022

Bednota and *Крестьянская газета / Krestyanskaya Gazeta*), in which social dialects were used, appeared. For example, the leading newspaper *Правда / Pravda*, aimed at a more advanced reader, could use a heading with the bookish words *Японское вмешательство в Сибирю (Japanese intervention in Siberia)*, and the newspaper *Беднота/Bednota* had a similar material with a heading containing colloquial words *Вздумали поживиться богатствами Сибирю*. We decided to profit from the riches of Siberia. Or *Правда / Pravda* gave the headline: *Наш триумф (Our triumph)*, and *Беднота/Bednota*: *Буржуям туго (The bourgeois is hard pressed)* [10].

The tuning fork of mass newspapers were letters from workers' and peasants' correspondents who made up most of the texts of popular newspapers. It raised the circulation of newspapers for the illiterate reader. This motivation confirms the opinion expressed by I. A. Baudouin de Courtenay at the end of the 19th century, "The basis of linguistics should be not only individual psychology, but also sociology" [10]. However, as far as the end of the 1920s, the bureaucratization of the new system changed the content and stylistics of newspapers and led to the monotony of the social content of the Soviet press, to the development of the Orwellian Newspeak and the prohibition of sociolinguistic research in the Soviet Union.

A new stage in the study of Russian social dialects began only in the early 70s of the 20th century in the works by M. V. Panov, L. P. Krysin, A. D. Schweitser, L. B. Nikolsky and other scholars. Let us put an increased focus on the four-volume collective work of the staff of the Institute of Russian Language of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR "Russian Language and Soviet Society" [9], written under the supervision of M.V. Panov. This is the first study of the modern Russian language that dwells on the influence of social factors on the vocabulary, word formation, morphology, syntax, phonetics and vernaculars. A significant result of the work is that the social factor "Education" turned out to be more important for the development of the norms of speech culture than the factor "Place of birth".

This fundamental work confirmed the ideas of I. A. Baudouin de Courtenay of the existence of social differentiation of language and the role of "social layers", which reinforced his position as one of the founders of sociolinguistics.

The ideas of Baudouin de Courtenay turned out to be no less important for linguodidactics. Let us recall the opinion of L.V. Shcherba, who, being a student of Professor Baudouin de Courtenay, wrote that although Baudouin "did not leave behind anything specifically related to the methodology of teaching foreign languages, he was absolutely alien to scientific arrogance and in every possible way encouraged his students to study these or another kind of application of their science to practice" [11].

Let us give an example of such an application of sociolinguistics to the methodology of teaching Russian as a foreign language using the example of the practice conversation book "Russian in Communication Situations" [5]. The manual consists of 16 bookmarks, each of which deals with everyday topics "Давайте познакомимся" (Let's become acquainted), "Встреча" (Meeting), "Завтрак" (Breakfast), "Обед" (Dinner-Time), "Как доехать?" (Journey) and others. The methodological novelty of the manual lies in the fact that each topic was presented in three role variants: 1) peer friends, 2) girlfriends, 3) people of different ages. These differences dictate different language options for greetings and goodbyes: 1) Привет!- Пока! 2)Здравствуй!- До встречи !3)Здравствуйте!-До свидания!, etc.

In addition to the lexical variants, the book also presented different syntactic variants associated with the role features of the characters and the nature of situations. For example,

young people can simply ask, “Скажите, как пройти к Эрмитажу?” (Tell me how to get to the Hermitage?), and a middle-aged woman would speak to an unacquainted man more politely, “Вы не могли бы сказать, где находится Эрмитаж?” (Could you tell me where the Hermitage is?)

These conversational variants are *sociolinguistic variables* and represent “any linguistic and speech correlates of stratification and situational variability” [13]. The works by L. P. Krysin, E. A. Zemskaya and other representatives of the Moscow school of functional sociolinguistics were a great contribution to the study of sociolinguistic variables.

The sets of *sociolinguistic variables* represent a kind of grammar of speech communication. The knowledge of this grammar is not only of methodological importance for the theory and practice of teaching foreign languages: it is of great psychological importance for the speaker, as it helps to overcome the psychological barrier and discomfort of the first contact with a foreign language environment. The psycholinguistic explanation of this effect is that knowing different communication variants helps the speaker choose a way of expression that is more consistent with the personal characteristics of the communicants in order to avoid false sounds in communication.

Many scholars have paid attention to the importance of situational components in language acquisition. Thus, D. Hymes, introducing the concept of “communicative competence”, wrote that a child masters vocabulary and grammar not in an abstract form, but under certain conditions determined by a place, purpose of the statement and the relations between the speakers [16]. According to L. V. Shcherba’s consistent remarks, a “living” language includes variants of pronunciation and use of words that reflect social differentiation of speech activity [15]. A child, learning his/her native language, distinguishes between intonation and speech formulas which his/her mother, father, grandmother use to address him/her. Unfortunately, the multidimensionality of this information is not always taken into account when teaching a second language. When teaching the Russian language outside the linguistic environment, the teacher (partly for the lack of competence in stylistics) usually gives only neutral variants of Russian words and constructions. We recommend using authentic mini-texts more widely in the classroom already in the first days of training. Russian proverbs and tongue twisters have excellent didactic properties.

The texts of fairy tales for children are also of great cognitive importance, especially when they have analogues with foreign ones. For example, in the fairy tale *Three Bears* students immediately recognize familiar characters, but their names and variations of these names cause bewilderment among foreigners, although they emotionally reveal the enigmatic Russian soul perhaps even brighter than a philosophical lecture on the peculiarities of the Russian mentality.

Foreign and Russian researchers have accumulated a significant number of observations on the determinants of speech behavior. One of the most famous American sociolinguists D. Hymes [16] proposed to include such factors as the *form, content and topic* of a message in the model of social determination of speech activity, citing the dependence of the choice of speech variants on the *topic* of conversation, on the *setting* and *situation* of speech act. The components of the model include both the *participants in communicative act* (speaker, listener, audience) and their interaction (the language of children in the presence of an adult, the language of representatives of one culture in the presence of a person from another cultural environment, etc.).

An interesting experience of describing the sociolinguistic model was presented by S. Ervin-Tripp [17] by means the example of the choice of a speech variant of address among teachers of an American university. The list of selectors that determine the choice of a speech form is indicative: *situation with a marked status* (courtroom, Academic Council, Congress, etc.), persons of different status, age and gender: *relative, friend, colleague, addressee, older, younger than the addressant, man, woman, etc.* dr.

According to A. D. Shveitser, promising are the complex studies of speech activity in a social context, with account taken of the whole variety of its social determinants: environment, sphere of language use, role relationships between communicants and other determinants of the speech act. For illustrative purposes, A. D. Shveitser gives an analysis of the speech behavior of bilinguals in L. N. Tolstoy's novel *War and Peace*. Social information is carried by the very fact of choice, preference for French or Russian by the characters of the novel. The use of a certain variant is a social symbol [18].

4. Summary

The analysis of the material presented shows great opportunities for using the apparatus of sociolinguistics in linguistics and linguodidactics. Unfortunately, textbooks on Russian as a foreign language published in Russia rarely include a sociolinguistic component into the lesson material. Our linguistic science in the 20th century did not become rich in an investigation similar to that supervised by M. V. Panov in 1968, although social processes in the 90s of the 20th century strongly influenced the vocabulary and syntax of the Russian language.

5. Conclusions

Sociolinguistic model of behavior can be described in *sociolinguistic* terms based on the choice of a certain strategy of sociolinguistic variables or using a logical model, when the social factors that limit and determine a choice can be represented as a sequence of selectors. Ideally, each selector should be based on a binary opposition of social designations. It would be desirable to establish a hierarchy of these designations, to reveal their relative strength" [18].

Identifying sociolinguistic variables in different cultures is of great importance for teaching strategies and tactics of tolerant communication through a foreign language, so that the other person's word is *understood* and *accepted* by the interlocutor, taking into account the diversity of social determinants reflected in it.

Mass media also play an oversize role in the cultivation of social tolerance which Russian and foreign sociolinguists lay emphasis on. Among the latest works of foreign experts, I would like to make a pointed reference to the works by professors of Matej Bel University of Slovakia [20], with whom the Department of Intercultural Communication of Herzen State Pedagogical University of Russia fruitfully cooperates.

It is pleasant that the scientific ideas of I. A. Baudouin de Courtenay find continuators of his work in the field of sociolinguistic science and in the field of linguodidactics of the 21st century.

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