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Lexical Layers of Identity

Focusing on Slavic languages, Danko Šipka provides a systematic approach to lexical indicators of cultural identity. In contrast to existing research, which focuses heavily on syntactic and phonological approaches, Šipka's approach is novel, more systematic and encompassing, and postulates three lexical layers of cultural identity: deep, exchange, and surface. The deep layer pertains to culture-specific words, divisions, and features that are generally not subject to change and intervention. The exchange layer includes lexical markers of cultural influences resulting from lexical borrowing, which situates the speakers into various cultural circles. This layer is subject to gradual changes and some limited level of intervention from linguistic elites is possible. Finally, the surface layer encompasses the processes and consequences of lexical planning. It is subject to abrupt changes, and it is shaped in constant negotiation between linguistic elites and the general body of speakers.

DANKO ŠIPKA is Professor of Slavic Languages and Applied Linguistics at Arizona State University. His research interests include lexicography, lexicology, morphology, and computational linguistics. His publications encompass over 150 papers and reviews as well as thirty books including *Lexical Conflict* (Cambridge, 2015).

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Lexical Layers of Identity

Words, Meaning, and Culture in the Slavic Languages

Danko Šipka

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Preface

It is a truism in cross-cultural linguistic studies that the lexicon of any language or group of related languages represents a repository of cultural identity markers. The same holds true for the policies and the attitudes about these identity markers (e.g., inherited, i.e., "domestic" versus borrowed, i.e., "foreign" words). While there exists a rich literature about specific words and concepts from a linguistic anthropology viewpoint, borrowing and other contact-driven changes from a contact linguistic perspective, as well as a body of works on policies and attitudes toward lexical markers of cultural identity from a sociolinguistic point of view, these works remain enclosed in their particular fields and a big picture about lexical layers of cultural identity remains elusive.

The principal goal of this book is to bring the three fields together and provide a synthesis of the states and processes relating to the lexical markers of cultural identity. The aforementioned fields (lexical structure, lexical borrowing, and lexical planning) are relevant in answering the questions about what lexical elements culturally define speakers of various languages. Speakers of any language are culturally defined by how their lexicon carves out their field of thinking (e.g., if they have a separate word for *foot* and *leg, older brother* and *younger brother*, and so on). They are furthermore defined by belonging to a cultural circle and geographical or historical setting of some kind, the lexical expression of which are borrowings from various culturally, geographically, or historically relevant languages or their absence. Examples of this include Greco-Latin borrowings in various European languages and their absence in many other languages, borrowings from English in Japanese and their absence in Mandarin Chinese, where new words are coined for new concepts, Norman lexicon in English, etc. Finally, in standard languages, they are defined by the constant negotiation of lexical choices between linguistic elites and the general body of speakers (e.g., efforts to declare a word "incorrect," to replace one word with the other, to introduce a word for a new concept) and the attitudes of the body of speakers toward these activities of lexical planning.

It could not be emphasized enough that the present monograph represents a first step toward a systematic exploration of lexical markers of cultural identity. As such, it does not offer definite answers to any questions but rather

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points to the need for a comprehensive construal of these markers and proposes techniques for their exploration. In light of this, the material from Slavic languages is used primarily to illustrate the approach rather than to conduct its comprehensive analysis.

The present monograph uses materials from three major Slavic languages: Russian, Polish, and Serbo-Croatian[1] (with numerous references to other Slavic languages) to identify three lexical layers of cultural identity and explore relationships between them. These three languages are most widely spoken in their respective branches, and they represent various anthropological-linguistic, contact-linguistic, and sociolinguistic environments. The lexicons of these Slavic languages are explored in the following three layers rooted in the aforementioned phenomena that culturally define speakers and the three separate research traditions devoted to them. The following three layers concurrently represent the three main parts of the book, divided further into chapters.

a. The first component is the deep cultural layer, comprising culture-bound concepts, different carving of various conceptual spheres, etc. – the first previously mentioned lexical expression of cultural identity, studied in anthropological linguistics.
b. The second element of the present model encompasses the exchange layer, which pertains to the inbound lexical transfer from other languages in Slavic and the way the lexicons of Slavic languages are incorporated and perceived in other languages that culturally defines speakers, and is studied in the literature on linguistic contacts.
c. The final component is the surface layer, encompassing planned intervention in the lexicon and speakers' attitudes toward the lexicon and the interventions, i.e., the third lexical sphere that culturally defines the speakers, studied in lexicological sociolinguistics.

The analysis strives to provide the tools and initiate research that would eventually be a basis for answering the following questions. First: which cultural identity markers can be found in each of the three proposed layers? Second: what is the best way of exploring lexical markers of cultural identity in these layers? Third: which segments of the layers are stable, and which ones exhibit a higher susceptibility toward changes? Finally: how do the

[1] This language is also known as Bosnian/Croatian/Montenegrin/Serbian, i.e., under the names of its ethnic standards. The term Serbo-Croatian versus Bosnian/Croatian/Montenegrin/Serbian is hotly debated just like the issue of whether it is one polycentric standard language or whether each of its varieties represents a separate language (for more about these debates, see Kordić, 2010). These politicized debates are generally not of interest here. Changing the name or the approach to the language(s) is not going to change the findings of this research. The intricate sociolinguistic status of this language will be discussed further in Chapters 10–12. Some examples in this text will pertain to Serbo-Croatian in its entirety, and some to one of its ethnic variants, which will be clearly noted.

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three layers interact? My goal here is to initiate the process of answering these questions, not to provide answers to them.

A key idea behind this project is that there is a kind of cultural identity that profiles each speaker of any standard language as a member of the group that shares that standard language. In other words, rather than assuming that standard languages (and in many cultures and increasingly so, the standard language is the principal linguistic form for most of the population) only encapsulate national or any other identity, I will make a claim that they create an identity on their own. The speakers are then culturally defined as users of their respective standard language, one of its ethnic or geographical variants, and of a group of related languages. Clearly, the cultural identity of speakers profiled by the language and language group is connected to all other identities and to many other intersecting cultures, but one can also legitimately talk about linguistic cultural identity. As noted, there are areas of stability and change in linguistic cultural identity and there are areas of cross-speaker, cross-region, cross-generational, cross-gender variation, but all speakers are profiled by the markers of this linguistic identity, if with nothing else, then by the potential to use or not use any of the relevant markers. It is of utmost importance to realize at the very outset that the phenomena discussed here represent only a part of the markers of cultural identity. Not only do they interact internally and exibit interpersonal and intergroup variance, but they also engage in exchange with various other markers of cultural identity, which moderate them in the final outcome.

The lexicon of a language is the primary repository of the aforementioned linguistic markers of cultural identity. Standard languages have a broader repertoire of those markers than other forms that a speaker may use (e.g., rural or urban dialects) given that the surface layer remains by and large their exclusive preserve. Other linguistic forms typically evolve without linguistics elites having any prominent role, as they may be present only marginally rather than systematically. Hence the decision to explore lexical layers of cultural identity in standard languages in the present monograph.

Focusing on the lexicon does not mean that no other markers of cultural identity exist. For example, any student of Slavic languages will be familiar with morphosyntactic frames such as Russian *мне не хочется* and Polish *nie chce mi się* 'I do not feel like, I do not want' (literally: It does not want itself to me), Serbo-Croatian *hladno mi je, dosadno mi je* 'I am cold, I am bored' (literally: cold to me it is, boring to me it is), and many others. One might argue that they may be related to some widespread beliefs, but it would be extraordinarily difficult to find consistent proof for such claims. Not only is the lexicon the principal repository of the markers of cultural identity, it also lends itself to consistent qualitative and quantitative analyses much better than other linguistic elements. And last but not least, large dictionary datasets of lexical elements are readily available, which is not the case with morphosyntactic structures.

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The book addresses general linguistic states and processes in the lexicon using material from Slavic languages, which could be of interest to researchers and students at Slavic and linguistic departments. Sections devoted to the three explored layers should additionally attract the attention of students and professionals in the field of anthropology, psychology, history, sociology, and political science. Cultural anthropologists and intercultural psychologists will be interested in the analysis of the deep layer, as it discusses how the categories of cross-cultural anthropology (e.g., polychronism versus monochronism) find their expression in the lexicon. Historians may be attracted to the sections about the exchange layer, as these markers of cultural identity are a clear consequence of historical contact and interaction. Sociologists and political scientists may find the analysis of the surface layer interesting as it discusses the mechanisms of establishing authority in society and the reactions to these attempts. As is the case with any broadly conceived monographs in social and behavioral sciences, not all parts will be of interest to all readers. Each such project maintains a fine balance between accessibility and scholarly rigor. My goal was to make the introduction and the conclusion accessible to all potential readership constituencies and to make other segments of the text that had to maintain some level of technicality to keep them rigorous enough accessible to those who may take interest in them.

One should note that the nexus of language and culture features an extremely high level of complexity. The task at hand here is not to provide a definitive account of all factors at play but rather to establish the mechanisms that elucidate some relevant issues and provide a systematic account of this field in a broader context. To use a metaphor, the task here is to come up with basic ingredients for a GPS to facilitate moving through the lexical jungle of cultural linguistics rather than to catalog everything that dwells in that jungle.[2] To add a simile to a metaphor, the work here is akin to that of an astrobiologist – I am looking for the places where something that has not yet been proven may be sought and for the ways of proving it.

The book is organized into five parts, each with three chapters. Nesting between the introductory and concluding parts are the parts covering the three lexical layers of identity, the deep layer, the exchange layer, and the surface layer, that reflect the triad model proposed in the book. The segmentation into the five parts reflects the triad model proposed in the book. The parts about the deep, the exchange, and the surface layers are thus nested between an introduction and conclusion.

The first part of the present monograph comprises three chapters: "The Conceptual Map," "Relevant Research Traditions," and "Research

[2] I am grateful to Wayles Browne for pointing this out to me using a fine reference to Prutkov's (1854) aphorism: "Никто не обнимет необъятного" (Nobody can encompass the non-encompassable) (repeated as aphorism 3, 44, 67, and as a part of aphorism 160).

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Methodology." Chapter 1 introduces three key concepts: *culture*, *identity*, and the *lexeme*. It also introduces the derived idea of Slavic cultural identity, which is an additional important concept given that the analysis is conducted using the example of Slavic languages. Additionally, important concepts of authority and ethnicity are discussed. With these concepts in mind, an introductory definition and an exemplification of the deep, exchange, and surface lexical layers of cultural identity are proposed. Chapter 2 discusses relevant intercultural research traditions, most notably Russian "linguoculturology," the Natural Semantic Metalanguage (NSM) theory, and cultural linguistics. Given the broader scope of the model proposed in this book, work from the fields of contact linguistics and sociolinguistic lexicology is also discussed. Chapter 3 proposes a methodological framework for the study of lexical markers of cultural identity based on the epistemological construct of the three layers. The framework is proposed with an eye to partially resolving the challenges of the research discussed in the previous chapter.

The second part discusses the deep layer. Chapter 4, "Lexeme-level Culture-bound Words, Divisions," explores how language-specific words and their features reflect the cultural identity of their speakers. Chapter 5, "Features, Lexicon-level Culture-bound Field Density," looks into how the depth and breadth of lexical fields express cultural characteristics. Finally, the last chapter in this part, Chapter 6, "Stability and Change," tells the story of stability and change in the lexical markers of cultural identity.

The third part of the book is devoted to the exchange layer. Chapter 7, "Cultural Influences," looks into the major sources that have shaped the cultural markers in the exchange lexical layer. Chapter 8, "Geographical Contact," explores the words from surrounding and substrate languages. Finally, Chapter 9, "Inbound and Outbound Exchange," addresses the different statuses of Slavic languages as a source or recipient of lexical transfer.

The fourth part of this monograph discusses the surface layer. Chapter 10, "Lexical Planning," offers a general overview of various paths of linguistic interventions. The next chapter, "Lexicographic Traditions," looks into the practice of enforcing lexical solutions in lexicography, the most direct manner of lexical engineering. Finally, Chapter 12, "Attitudes," analyzes the dynamic of accepting or rejecting lexical solutions by the speakers of Slavic languages.

The final part of this book first discusses, in Chapter 13, the interaction between the three layers before proceeding, in Chapter 14, to summing up the books main findings and providing, in Chapter 15, an account of the prospects for further research in this field.

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Almanach 79 (2017), pp. 1–24. Parts of Chapter 7 have appeared as "The Challenges of Contrasting Interactional Lexical Layers of Slavic Cultural Identities," *Mundo Eslavo* 16 (2017), pp. 441–452. Parts of Chapter 11 have appeared as "Sociolinguistic Factors in South Slavic Lexicographic Traditions," in Domínguez-Rodríguez, Mª Victoria et al. (eds.), *Words across History: Advances in Historical Lexicography and Lexicology,* Grand Canaria University Press, 2016, pp. 413–424, and "Exclusion Labels in Slavic Monolingual Dictionaries: Lexicographic Construal of Non-Standardness," *Colloquium* 1/1 (2016), pp. 1–17.

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