Psycholinguistics of Organizational Phenomena: A Case of the Managerial Culture Study

Психолінгвістика організаційних явищ: на прикладі дослідження управлінської культури

Vitalii Shymko
Dr. Sc. in Psychology,
Professor

Віталій Шимко
доктор психологічних наук,
професор

E-mail: shymko@outlook.com
https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4937-6976

*Hryhorii Skovoroda University
in Pereiaslav (Ukraine)*
✉ 30, Sukhomlynskyi Str.,
Pereiaslav, Kyiv Reg., 08401

*Університет Григорія Сковороди
в Переяславі (Україна)*
✉ вул. Сухомлинського, 30,
м. Переяслав, Київська обл.,
Україна, 08401

ABSTRACT

Purpose. *This article is devoted to the case study of relevant linguacultural stereotypes of the particular organization's managerial culture and based on corresponding results the inquiry of the discourses formation features associated with the lexico-semantic meanings dispersion of (Foucault).*

Methods and Procedure of Research. *Top managers of a large Ukrainian enterprise (67 respondents) were asked to arbitrarily describe the following concepts – "manager", "subordinate", "managerial style". Each concept was differentiated according to the principle of the lexico-semantic opposition ("productive – counterproductive"). The obtained set of texts was lemmatized and a frequency analysis of the lemmas was carried out as well. Collocations were also evaluated, in particular, repeated n-grams were identified. In the further analysis were used all detected n-grams and those lemmas, the observed frequencies of which statistically significantly exceeded the expected ones.*

Results. Discourse formation features are determined by the paradigmatic relations of lexico-semantic units (words) and their semantic linear compatibility. The paradigmatic dispersion of a discourse is represented by the quality of connections between lemmas according to the criterion of the paradigm types to be found. Also informative is the assessment of the lemmas number (granularity of the discourse) and the spectrum diversity of paradigmatic relations in the discourse. These parameters reflect the properties of homogeneity/complexity of discourse meanings dispersion. The syntagmatic dissemination of discourse is manifested by the features of the words semantic linear interrelationship in each n-gram. This parameter reflects the quality of rationalizations (verbal-logical chains) associated with the corresponding discourses. The length of n-grams (the number of words) is also indicative – the higher n, the more differentiated the discourse is and vice versa. Matching the words semantics in n-grams with lemmas allows one to draw a conclusion regarding the internal consistency (integration) of the discourse.

Conclusions. Psycholinguistic tools can be effectively used in an organizational phenomena study. In particular, the frequency analysis of lemmas, their lexico-semantic evaluation, as well as the qualitative analysis of n-grams in the problem-targeted texts of respondents allows one to solve applied research issues related to the assessment of current linguacultural trends in an organization and understanding their possible causes. Managerial culture, as a linguacultural phenomenon, is represented by a set of stably reproduced discourses in the process of the organization's functioning. At the same time, discourses are constituted by the dispersion of meanings (words), which is being realized in two linguistic dimensions – paradigmatic and syntagmatic ones.

Key words: *discourse, organization, managerial culture, dispersion of meanings, paradigmatics, syntagmatics.*

Introduction

Psycholinguistic tools have significant methodological potential for interdisciplinary research. Modern scientists pay special attention to the use of psycholinguistics in the studies of various organizational phenomena (Blumenthal, 2019; Chen & Hu, 2019; Das et al., 2019; Gandino et al., 2020; Giancaspro et al., 2015; Grey & Tagarelli, 2018; Manuti & Mininni, 2013; Myskin, 2021; Putnam & Fairhurst, 2001; Shymko, 2018b; Szymanski & Kalra, 2019; Tripp & Munson, 2021). It is noteworthy that the crystallization of interest in this interdisciplinary segment is accompanied by the emergence of the particular term – "organizational psycholinguistics" (Myskin, 2021) and ongoing attempts of theoretical and methodological systematization of the subject matter field of this category.

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At the same time, the practical implementation of the instrumental capabilities of psycholinguistics in organizational research is hampered mainly by two factors: (1) the relative cumbersomeness of the psycholinguistics research procedures; (2) difficulties due to validation and standardization of the results obtained. The later factor assumes the necessity of an appropriate comparison base (frame of reference). The solution of this problem, in turn, requires the development of *corpus psycholinguistics*, a fundamentally new interdisciplinary direction. In addition to linguistic markup, each text of the psycholinguistic corpus must also be synchronized with standardized socio-biographical, differential psychological, and other structured data about the corresponding author. Such studies are currently carried out relatively rarely and require significant resources – computational, financial, temporal, etc.

Nevertheless, on the one hand, psycholinguistic measurements of organizational phenomena can be an effective research approach even without availability of corps capacities. On the other hand, linguistic and cultural (further – linguacultural) aspects of organizational phenomena potentially contain valuable empirical information for the development of psycholinguistic theory and practice. In particular, this concerns the concept of discourse as a structural and content-wise unit of linguistic consciousness (Shymko, 2018a). Such a reasoning forms the purpose of this publication, namely, using the example of a psycholinguistic study of the managerial culture of a particular organization, to study the features of the discourses formation as a result of the lexico-semantic meanings dispersion (Foucault, 1972).

Methodology of the Empirical Research

The general methodological platform of this empirical study was based on widely and thoroughly studied ideas about the relationship between culture, language and discourse (Eades, 2005; Foucault, 1972; Gelman & Roberts, 2017; Moder & Martinovic-Zic, 2004; Sherzer, 1987 et al.). **The object of the study** is the linguacultural stereotypes that are relevant to the professional activities of the managers. At the same time, we proceeded from the fact that these stereotypes have a discursive nature and morphology. As a result, we considered the psycholinguistic features of the meanings (words) dispersion that constitutes these

discourses as a **subject matter of research**. **The purpose of the study** was to form an idea of the current linguacultural stereotypes of managers, reflecting such concepts as – "manager", "subordinate", "managerial style", as well as to assess the degree of differentiation, integratedness and balance of managerial culture. To achieve this goal, research objectives were formulated related to the analysis of the lexical-semantic paradigmatics and syntagmatics of the discovered linguacultural stereotypes. That is, we proceeded from the **hypothesis** that the dispersion of meanings that generates discourse is realized in two linguistic dimensions – paradigmatic and syntagmatic ones.

The described methodological provisions determined the structure of the obtained empirical results analysis by evaluating: (1) paradigmatic relations (based on the analysis of lemmas); (2) lexical units compatibility (by studying *n*-grams). Wherein, when assessing the paradigmatic dispersion of discourse, we investigated the quality of connections between lemmas according to the criterion of detected paradigm types. Thus, synonymy indicates of a closer and semantically homogeneous connection compared to, for example, a thematic paradigm. The presence of antonymy introduces the properties of oppositionality into discourse-forming dispersion, etc. We also evaluated the number of lemmas (discourse granularity) and the diversity of the paradigmatic relations spectrum in discourse. We believe these parameters are associated with the properties of homogeneity/complexity of meanings dispersion and use them as a conditional comparative measure, juxtaposing different discourses. These methodological nuances, firstly, reflect our theoretical assumptions about the discourse nature. Secondly, they were due to the applied objectives of the study, namely, the need to assess the differentiation, integration and balance of managerial culture.

We studied the syntagmatic dispersion of discourse by the semantic linear compatibility of words in each *n*-gram. We believe that this parameter reflects the quality of rationalizations (verbal-logical chains) associated with the corresponding discourses. We also took into account the length of *n*-grams (number of words). As in the case of assessing the paradigm diversity in discourse, we position this parameter as a conditional criterion for discourses comparison. Namely, the higher *n*, the more differentiated is the discourse and vice versa. We also compared the semantics of words in n-grams with lemmas meanings to assess the internal consistency (integration) of the discourse.

Concluding the description of the research methodology, we note that the combination of the above lexico-semantic characteristics forms a structurally complex, non-linear psycholinguistic formation – a discursive field. Empirical discourse has a "field-wise" nature or, in other words, is represented by a field of factors. We conceptualize cultural phenomena as a sustainable recurrence of discourses within the framework of relevant discursive practices (Shymko, 2018b).

Methods and Procedures of the Research

The study of managerial culture was conducted at the head office of one of the largest Ukrainian enterprises (energy sector) in April-May 2021. The sample included top managers of the organization – 67 respondents (age range from 28 to 56 years, 55.2% women). All respondents were bilingual (Ukrainian and Russian). They were asked to use any of the languages on their choice. In the process of communication and performance of tasks, 48 participants (71.64%) used the Ukrainian language, the rest – Russian one. The study was carried out in two stages. At the first (pilot) stage, the subjects were asked to arbitrarily describe productive and counterproductive concepts of – "manager", "subordinate", "managerial style". Such an initial differentiation of these concepts due to the principle of the lexico-semantic opposition was carried out based on considerations of the corresponding structural features of a discursive space, in which the meanings are being disseminated (Jeffries, 2010; King, 1991; Paradis et al., 2015; Storjohann, 2010; et al.).

The obtained Russian texts were translated into Ukrainian, and the Ukrainian ones into Russian language (2 experts in the field of Ukrainian and Russian philology participated, both with a scientific degree in linguistics and twenty years of experience in scientific and pedagogical activity). Each set of texts was lemmatized, and a frequency analysis of the lemmas was carried out. Collocations were also evaluated, in particular, repeated *n*-grams were identified. Cross-comparison of lemmas and *n*-grams of Ukrainian and Russian arrays gave identical results. In further analysis, all detected repeated *n*-grams and those lemmas were used, the observed frequencies of which statistically significantly exceeded the expected ones (the Chi-square test was applied for the corresponding selection).

The second (main) part of the study included structured interviews and debriefings with respondents, the results of which were used to verify linguacultural hypotheses formed at the pilot stage. The protocols used in the study, worksheets of lemmas and n-grams, as well as the database with the data of the research main part in the format of the IBM SPSS Statistics software package have been put in the international repository Harvard Dataverse (Shymko, 2022).

Results and Discussions

The studied concepts ("manager", "subordinate", "managerial style") are represented by pairs of linguacultural stereotypes in the form of corresponding lexical-semantic oppositions. These oppositions determine the primary dispersion of meanings in the respective discourses. Stereotypes are formulated not so much arbitrarily, but rather based on the organization functioning logic. In other words, day-to-day organizational activity objectively actualizes the necessity and importance of distinguishing between "productivity" and "counterproductivity". This, in turn, groups opposition-wise the factors that determine or at least significantly affect the managerial culture. We present this argument as evidence in favor of the naturalness (authenticity) of the discourses under study, their applied validity in relation to the organizational management system.

The paradigmatics of the lemmas related to the linguacultural stereotype "productive manager" (Table 1), in our opinion, reveals a thematic connection to a greater extent. These concepts can be attributed to the thematic series – "moral and business personality qualities". Let us note that the implicit hyperseme here is semantically wider than the concept of "manager". Based on the context of the organization in which the study was conducted, these lemmas include attribution not only of managerial personnel, but also applicable to other categories of professionals (for example, employees of the sales department). Also, taking into account the organizational context, we can assume the presence of hyper-hyponymic connection traces ("skill/competence" is a generic concept, and "fairness", "leadership" are specific). Separately, we emphasize that hereinafter we do not carry out the usual linguistic analysis. We rather use corresponding lexico-semantic categories in the discourse study for psycholinguistic evaluation of the meanings (words)

dispersion. Such a non-classical approach is necessarily due to our view specifics on discourse in the context of the subject matter field of psycholinguistics.

Table 1
Discoursive characteristics of the concept "manager"

Stereotypes	Lemmas	*N*-grams
Productive manager	Fairness Leadership Skill / competence	Fairness – charisma Sociability – leadership – fairness Fairness – structuredness – purposefulness
Counterproductive manager	Emotionality Aggressiveness (aggression) Haste Lack (of skill)	Feedback – absence Listening to the – subordinates (inability)

Returning to the "productive manager" stereotype, let us note that the semantic compatibility of words in *n*-grams indicates of the rather good quality of the corresponding rationalizations. Wherein, the semantics of *n*-grams as a whole corresponds with the semantics of lemmas, which indicates of the internal consistency of this discourse.

The lemmas related to the "counterproductive manager" (Table 1) are also united by a broad thematic paradigm, which can be designated as – "maladaptive personality traits". This paradigm is semantically even more distanced from the managerial theme (compared to "productive manager"). It is also noteworthy that "lack of (skill)" is antonym-wise associated with "skill/competence". The presence of antonymic relations in the opposition pair of stereotypes is quite logical and expected. However, other antonyms in this case, as we can see, are absent.

The contrast to the above is the specificity of the semantic connections between "aggressiveness", "emotionality" ("counterproductive manager") and "leadership" ("productive manager") discovered during interviews with respondents. Namely, the first two concepts for the study participants are actually synonymous. On the other hand, "leadership" for the majority of respondents implies a socially acceptable implementation of aggression as a tool to achieve organizational productivity goals. One of the attributes of the mentioned social acceptability is the manager's lack of emotional feelings and corresponding manifestations. Thus, schematically this can be depicted as: leadership = aggression – emotions.

The described may indicate either of insufficient differentiation (mixing) of the two discourses, or of the presence in the organizational context of specific factors "impoverishing" leadership due to "compromising" emotions. During the research main part, both assumptions were proved. Turned out, that few highly productive managers (according to the economic criteria of the organization) habitually behaved emotionally expressive, which in a way has "disoriented" the rest majority of managers and had a corresponding effect on the stereotypes of managerial culture. As a result, any emotionality of a manager had been acquiring a negative connotation. Indirectly, this phenomenon manifested itself in a noticeable mismatch between the semantics of the corresponding *n*-grams and lemmas (Table 1).

Indicative is the low level of granularity of the "productive subordinate" stereotype and the close synonymic paradigmatics of the corresponding lemmas, as well as the antonymic opposition to the "counterproductive subordinate" ("responsibility – Irresponsibility"). At the same time, the level of granularity of the second stereotype and the semantics of the corresponding thematic series are significantly bigger and more heterogeneous compared to the first one. In other words, the "counterproductive subordinate" is more recognizable (Table 2).

Table 2
Discursive characteristics of the concept "subordinate"

Stereotypes	Lemmas	N-grams
Productive subordinate	Responsibility Diligence	Responsibility – honesty Diligence – responsibility Initiative – responsibility To work – skill Team – to work
Counterproductive subordinate	Task Irresponsibility Lie Theft Lack (of desire, competence)	Competence – lack Work – attitude Negation – constantly Theft – cheating Desire – lack

Also noteworthy is the detailed specification of this stereotype ("irresponsibility", "lie, "theft", "lack (of desire, competence)") and its semantic connection with the "task" lemma. This led to the idea that counterproductivity is being found empirically by managers

(when subordinates are performing tasks). At the same time, productivity is conceptualized in the discourse more abstractly, it is kind of torn off from objectifying criteria. We assumed that this difference is associated with a lack of managerial empathy due to the above-described situation of unemotional leadership. This hypothesis was also confirmed during interviewing and debriefing of respondents.

Analyzing the syntagmatic dispersion of the meanings of the concept "subordinate", we note that for each part of the opposition under consideration, the differentiation of discourses (n = 2) is obviously lower compared to the discourses, that form concept "manager" (Table 1), while the discourses themselves are internally more consistent (Table 2). Thus, the concept of "subordinate" is characterized by relatively greater categoricalness, one-sidedness, tendentiousness, etc. This feature also manifested itself and received a deeper understanding when we were studying the dispersion of meanings in the discursive field of the concept "managerial style" (Table 3).

Table 3
Discursive characteristics of the concept "managerial style"

Stereotypes	Lemmas	N-grams
Productive style	Democracy Stringency Solution Will Control Victory	Will – stringency – victory Will – democracy – victory – stringency Buildup – democracy – control – system
Counterproductive style	Authoritarian Dictatorial	Authoritarian – style Authoritarian – work – systemic – totalitarian

As we can see, the paradigmatics of the "productive style" stereotype lemmas is characterized by a noticeable entropy of semantics and, according to our assessment, corresponds to the level of the lexico-semantic group. This contrasts with the close relationship between the obviously synonymous lemmas of the "counterproductive style" stereotype (Table 3). Against this background, signs of a possible hyper-hyponymic connection between the oppositional lemmas of the "managerial style" concept attract attention: "Authoritarian/dictatorial" is a generic concept; "stringency", "will", "control", "victory" are specific ones (characteristics of style). This feature may indicate of a low

differentiation (mixing) of the relevant discourses. It is also necessary to note the "democratic-dictatorial" antonymy. As we can see, the dispersion of meanings is accompanied by a relatively wide range of paradigmatic relationships. This is also accompanied by a significant difference in the degree of granularity of oppositional stereotypes. As we have already noted, such characteristics testify in favor of the heterogeneity and complexity of the corresponding discursive field.

Also, unlike the cases considered earlier, the analysis of the semantic compatibility of words in *n*-grams related to "managerial style" concept reveals some obvious contradictory features (for example, "will-democratism-victory-stringency"). In our opinion, this indicates of a lower quality of the corresponding rationalizations, the lack of semantic consistency and logicality. Another difference is manifested in the comparative instability of the words number in the *n*-grams. At the same time, the internal consistency of discourses is relatively high. In our opinion, the described characteristics clearly indicate the issue of the discursive field "managerial style" integratedness.

Based on the juxtaposition of the "manager", "subordinate" and "managerial style" concepts discourse features, we formulated a hypothesis about the deficit of the emotional component in the structure of leadership qualities of the managers, as mentioned above. And we also argued the assumption about the respective behavioral abreaction of repressed emotions through quasi-authoritarian pressure on subordinates, which is rationalized by managers in terms of "stringent/ strong-willed democracy" (Table 3). The results of the second (main) part of the managerial culture study persuasively confirmed these assumptions (Shymko, 2022).

Conclusions

Psycholinguistic tools can be effectively used in an organizational phenomena study. In particular, the frequency analysis of lemmas, their lexico-semantic evaluation, as well as the qualitative analysis of *n*-grams in the problem-targeted texts of respondents allows one to solve applied research issues related to the assessment of current linguacultural trends in an organization and understanding their possible causes.

Managerial culture, as a linguacultural phenomenon, is represented by a set of stably reproduced discourses in the process of the

organization's functioning. At the same time, discourses are constituted by the dispersion of meanings (words), which is being realized in two linguistic dimensions – paradigmatic and syntagmatic ones.

Discourse features are determined by the paradigmatic relations of lexical units and their semantic linear compatibility. To study the characteristics, one can use the frequency analysis of lemmas and *n*-grams.

Discourse formation features are determined by the paradigmatic relations of lexico-semantic units (words) and their semantic linear compatibility. The paradigmatic dispersion of a discourse is represented by the quality of connections between lemmas according to the criterion of the paradigm types to be found. Also informative is the assessment of the lemmas number (granularity of the discourse) and the spectrum diversity of paradigmatic relations in the discourse. These parameters reflect the properties of homogeneity/complexity of discourse meanings dispersion.

The syntagmatic dissemination of discourse is manifested by the features of the words semantic linear interrelationship in each *n*-gram. This parameter reflects the quality of rationalizations (verbal-logical chains) associated with the corresponding discourses. The length of *n*-grams (the number of words) is also indicative – the higher n, the more differentiated the discourse is and vice versa. Matching the words semantics in *n*-grams with lemmas allows one to draw a conclusion regarding the internal consistency (integration) of the discourse.

Applicability limitations of the above conclusions are related to the obvious quantitative and qualitative characteristics of the sample. We believe it is promising to continue testing of the hypotheses regarding the paradigmatic and syntagmatic features of the lexical-semantic dispersion in discourses on wide cross-linguistic samples. Of particular interest is the study of these issues in the context of corpus psycholinguistics.

Adherence to Ethical Standards

Ethics declarations. Prior to the start of the study, informed consent was obtained from all participants for voluntary participation. The study was conducted in compliance with domestic (Ethical code, 2009) and international ethical standards (American Psychological Association, 2002). The study was approved by the Scientific Ethics Committee of the Hryhorii Skovoroda University in Pereyaslav (Ukraine).

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Conflicts of Interest. The author declares no conflict of interest.

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АНОТАЦІЯ

Мета. *Ця стаття присвячена вивченню актуальних лінгвокультурных стереотипів управлінської культури конкретної організації та дослідженню на їхньому прикладі особливостей утворення дискурсів, пов'язаних із розсіюванням лексико-семантичних значень (Foucault).*

Методи та методики дослідження. *Топ-менеджерам великого українського підприємства (67 респондентів) було запропоновано довільно описати такі концепти – "керівник", "підлеглий", "управлінський стиль". Кожен концепт був*

диференційований за принципом лексико-семантичної опозиції ("продуктивний – контрпродуктивний"). Отриманий набір текстів було лематизовано та проведено частотний аналіз лем. Також були оцінені коллокації, зокрема, виділені n-грами, які повторювались у текстах. У проведеному аналізі використовувалися всі виявлені n-грами та ті леми, частоти яких статистично достовірно перевищували очікувані.

Результати. Особливості утворення дискурсів обумовлюються парадигматичними відносинами лексико-семантичних одиниць (слів) та їх смислової лінійної сполучності. Парадигматичне розсіювання дискурсу представлене якістю зв'язків між лемами за критерієм типів наявних парадигм. Також інформативним є оцінка кількості лем (деталізованість дискурсу) та різноманітність спектру парадигматичних відносин у дискурсі. Ці параметри відображають властивості однорідності/складності розсіювання значень дискурсу. Синтагматичне розсіювання дискурсу проявляється у особливостях смислової лінійної співвіднесеності слів у кожній n-грамі. Цей параметр відображає якість раціоналізацій (словесно-логічних ланцюжків), пов'язаних з відповідними дискурсами. Також індикативною є довжина n-грам (кількість слів) – чим вище n, тим більш диференційованим є дискурс і навпаки. Співвіднесення семантики слів у n-грамах з лемами дозволяє зробити висновок щодо внутрішньої узгодженості (інтегрованості) дискурсу.

Висновки. Психолінгвістичний інструментарій може ефективно використовуватися задля вивчення організаційних феноменів. Зокрема, частотний аналіз лем, їх лексико-семантична оцінка, а також якісне вивчення n-грам у проблемно-цільових текстах респондентів дозволяє вирішувати прикладні завдання, пов'язані з оцінкою актуальних лингвокультурних трендів в організації та розумінням їх можливих причин. Управлінська культура, як лінгвокультурне явище, представлено сукупністю стійко відтворюваних дискурсів у процесі функціонування організації. При цьому дискурси конституюються розсіюванням значень (слів), що реалізується у двох мовних вимірах – парадигматичному та синтагматичному.

Ключові слова: дискурс, організація, управлінська культура, розсіювання значень, парадигматика, синтагматика