



“OWN – OTHER” Category

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Abstract

This scholarly text provides a comprehensive analysis of the binary opposition “own – other” and its role in human cognition, language, and cultural systems. The historical, philosophical, psychological, and linguistic foundations of this opposition are explored, and its significance in the processes of human perception and categorization of reality is substantiated.

Keywords: “own – other” opposition, binary opposition, cognitive linguistics, linguo-culturology, categorization, national mentality, social identification, communicative relations.

Introduction

Contemporary The classification of events and phenomena surrounding us, and the perception of reality through their division into various categories, has been an essential mental, social, and psychological practice from the emergence of human society up to the present day [1]. Similarly, processes related to distinguishing or separating based on markers such as belonging or alienation such as “friend” and “enemy,” “them” and “us” have remained relevant in all historical periods [2].

The increasing number of studies in world linguistics devoted to exploring the interrelation between language and culture makes it possible to determine the significance of the “own – other” binary opposition as a category of consciousness and as a linguistic concept. This opposition has been examined, to varying degrees, by a number of scholars, including Ruth Wodak, L. I. Grishayeva, Teun A. van Dijk, Yuri S. Stepanov, Y. I. Sheygal, Roger Fowler, Nina D. Arutyunova, A. A. Matveyeva, V. V. Zhdanova and others. In their works, attention is primarily given to issues such as the origin of this opposition, the means and methods of its expression in language, and its reflection in cultural and social life [3, 4].

Methodology

In scholarly discourse, the concepts of “own” and “other” are interpreted in various ways and are also analyzed at the intersection of different disciplines. In philosophy, the study

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of the “own – other” dichotomy is connected with the problems of cognition (Martin Buber, Hans-Georg Gadamer) and human self-identification (Jürgen Habermas). Contemporary philosophical studies within this framework are significant because they focus on seeking solutions to modern issues such as the formation and development of culture, socio-cultural alienation, loss of identity, and the feeling of total loneliness (Bernhard Waldenfels, A. V. Shipilov), as noted by Y. V. Gordiyenko. Moreover, the researcher points out that the “own – other” opposition, as a category of consciousness, is also an object of study in psychology. It is considered a factor determining the formation of an individual's psychological characteristics and plays a role in defining interpersonal communication and relationships within the framework of the “self” (V. O. Petrovsky).

Results and Discussion

The “own – other” opposition is regarded as one of the fundamental binary paradigms of human cognition. This contrast is applied across all types of human activity and manifests in various forms: 1) opposing oneself to the surrounding world (“I – Other” / “I – He/She”); 2) opposing one's identity to another individual (“I – You”); 3) opposing oneself to a primary social group (“I – We” / “I – You” plural); and 4) opposing the group to which an individual belongs to another social group (“We – They” / “We – You”) [5].

The “own – other” opposition permeates culture as a whole, since at the core of perceiving the world lies the operation of identifying what is “one's own” and distinguishing it from what is “other.” This opposition is a universal concept for many social sciences, including philosophy, sociology, psychology, linguistics, and others, serving as a key reference point that enables reflection on the norms and values accepted within a particular linguo-cultural community. Considering an object as “one's own” implies comparing its features and values with those widely shared within a given community [6]. This opposition is one of the most ancient cultural and linguistic constants forming part of the national worldview. It serves as a basis for dividing all phenomena into familiar or unfamiliar, native, close, friendly, or, conversely, unknown, distant, and hostile. The sphere of social perception structured by the “own – other” opposition is present among all members of a cultural community. The clear distinction between “own” and “alien” has emerged across different peoples and has been reinforced through differences in language, beliefs, lifestyles, and moral norms [7, 8].

Above all, the “own – other” opposition is viewed as a universal binary opposition that defines categories of human consciousness. Such concepts are interconnected and together form a specific model of the world through which people perceive reality. The classification of these oppositional concepts is presented in the work of T. V. Sivyan as follows: binary oppositions in spatial structure (up/down, sky/earth, east/west, etc.); in temporal structure (day/night, summer/winter, etc.); in color (white/black, red/black, green/red, pink/blue, etc.); in natural versus cultural opposition (wet/dry, wild/domestic, etc.); and in social categories (male/female, big/small, own/alien, internal/external, etc.). On the basis of these bipolar sets of features, universal systems of signs are formed, through which the world is comprehended and conceptualized [9, 10].

In general, the “own – other” opposition is one of the most fundamental bipolar paradigms of human thinking and perception. It manifests itself in every sphere of human life, activity, culture, and values. In turn, this enables individuals, first of all, to oppose themselves to other people and to the entire existence, and secondly, to distinguish phenomena related

to themselves through such oppositions [11]. Observing examples of Uzbek folklore, it becomes evident that in folk epics and fairy tales, the “other” is often presented as a source of danger and trials, whereas the “own” functions as a protective, supportive, and patronizing force. For instance, any epic hero who leaves their homeland inevitably undergoes trials in a “foreign land”: they face deprivation, deception, loss of property and freedom, and separation from their loved ones that is, from those who are “their own.” In moments of hardship, however, the hero is invariably assisted by a patron figure such as a wise elder, a loyal friend, or even an animal. These helpers, who support the protagonist in overcoming trials, maintain a close and enduring relationship based on trust. In the Uzbek language, the semantic core of “own” is expressed through units such as *our person*, *one of us*, *fellow villager*, *colleague*, *compatriot*, *relative*, *close one*, and *one of our own*. These units are characterized by a positive axiological load, reinforcing social identity [12, 13].

In contrast, the semantic core of “other” is formed by units such as *stranger*, *alien*, *foreign*, *not one of us*, *distant*, *unknown*, *enemy*, *invader*, and *unsociable person*. These convey meanings closer to neutrality or negative evaluation, associated with caution, vigilance, alienation, and potentially undesirable traits. This opposition is studied in connection with a people’s values, mental representations, socio-ethical norms, and national identity. Through examples, it is demonstrated how the semes of “own” (closeness, belonging, protection, friendship) and “other” (alienness, caution, danger, distance) are reflected in linguistic units. The axiological function of language plays a crucial role in expressing the speaker’s worldview, system of values, and social experience. Axiolinguistics, in turn, examines evaluation, value judgments, and socio-psychological attitudes embedded in language. Within this framework, binary oppositions serve as an important analytical tool, revealing the conceptual thinking and moral norms of a society [14].

The opposition “we – they” / “own – other,” which constitutes the core semantic axis of the Uzbek mentality, is vividly reflected in folklore, idiomatic expressions, proverbs, phraseological units, and speech stereotypes. This section analyzes the content, semantic models, and underlying values represented by this opposition. Within the phraseological and paremio-logical layers of the Uzbek language, it functions as a strong axiological indicator, reflecting the people’s historical experience, social relations, collective identity, and cultural values. The evaluative semes embedded in such expressions convey one of the key categories of the national worldview the dialectic of “close – alien.” Therefore, this opposition occupies a central place in the axio-linguistic system of the Uzbek language [15].

Above all, the “own – other” opposition is regarded as a universal opposition that defines the categories of human consciousness. These concepts are interconnected and contribute to forming a specific model of the world through which individuals perceive reality. The classification of these concepts is presented in the research of T. V. Sivyan as follows: binary oppositions related to spatial structure (up/down, sky/earth, east/west, etc.); nature/culture oppositions (wet/dry, raw/boiled, etc.); social categories (male/female, big/small, own/alien, internal/external, etc.); temporal structure (day/night, summer/winter, etc.); and color (white/black, red/black, etc.). Based on these sets of binary features, universal systems of signs are constructed, through which the world is comprehended. Accordingly, the “own – other” contrast represents a universal binary opposition that expresses both the value orientations of an ethnos and the accumulated historical experience of humanity.

Binary oppositions may take the form of concepts, mythologemes, or categories. Russian linguists such as Yuri S. Stepanov and I. S. Vikhodseva interpret opposition as a concept. Following Yuri S. Stepanov, a concept is understood as “a cluster of culture in human consciousness; that which enters a person’s mental world from culture,” as well as “that through which a person enters culture and, in some cases, influences it.”

The “own – other” concept is distinguished from individual concepts by the presence of a semantic pair. The close connection between the components of this pair, along with their semantic differences, reflects the peculiarities of the linguistic consciousness of a nation and its individual representatives. It is important to note that the distinction between “own” and “others” does not only concern real, objective differences among people, but also includes mythologized and sometimes purely imaginary forms that arise in human consciousness. In this regard, the notions of “own” and “others” are shaped not only by the opposition itself and the objective information associated with it, but also through the reflection of subjective attitudes within human cognition.

According to M.N.Petrochenko, the “own – other” opposition can be interpreted as a process of understanding the world in which the “self” (the subject), relying on its own perception, is capable of identifying the domain of the “own” in relation to itself, as well as the domain of the “other,” that is, the alien, through its reflection in any object of reality. In the researcher’s view, the semantics of belonging/affiliation and alienation are characterized by their constant attachment to certain objects of reality that are either included in or excluded from the subject’s personal sphere. The scholar also identifies three key components in the formation of this opposition: the *categorizing subject* – primarily the “I,” which distinguishes between “own” and “other”; *the subject of the opposition* – a textual element in relation to which the domains of “own” or “other” are constructed; and the object of the opposition – a textual unit naming an object of reality to which the attribute of “own” or “other” is assigned. The researcher further notes that in lyrical songs, the “I” often speaks from a third-person perspective, thereby losing its subjectivity and weakening its categorizing function, whereas in proverbs and fairy tales this feature is expressed much more strongly.

Russian scholar Y.V.Gordiyenko emphasizes that in media discourse, an essential condition for representing conflict is the realization of the linguo-cultural opposition “own – other,” which serves as one of the main conflict-generating factors. The evaluative basis of this opposition is typically manifested in portraying the actions of the “own” as “correct,” while those of the “other” (the “alien”) are framed as “incorrect.” This allows the “own – other” opposition to be interpreted as a conceptual realization of the “good – bad” dichotomy and as a foundation of evaluative categories. The researcher further highlights that in media discourse, this opposition functions as a central conflict-genic mechanism: the actions of the “own” are associated with friendliness, correctness, and peace, whereas those of the “others” are linked with negativity, incorrectness, and hostility.

Conclusion

An inventory of evaluative strategies and tactics that shape the communicative organization of conflict-oriented media discourse in English demonstrates that the most representative strategies include opposition, reproach, manipulation, presentation of diverse viewpoints, and approval. These, in turn, are realized through various tactics such as passing judgment, issuing threats, acknowledging the existence of a problem, assigning blame,

manipulation, the use of well-known personalities and toponyms, focusing attention, logical argumentation, comparative analysis of opinions, engaging with the audience, expressing gratitude and recognition, proposing solutions to problems, and indicating success.

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