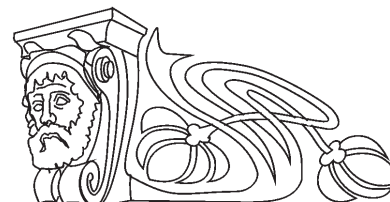Article

The double-nature of uncertainty and risk phenomena under cross-cultural communication

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Abstract. The article studies the phenomena of uncertainty and risk, namely their double-nature. It is shown that uncertainty and risk are inherent in people's life cycles. Their importance grows at present due to the abundance of information and digitalization. Special attention is paid to the various points of view on this problem and its characteristics. Moreover, uncertainty is one of the cultural categories in terms of cultural types. In this respect uncertainty and risk acquire special importance in the course of cross cultural communication. The ways of reducing uncertainty and risks are highlighted, namely adherence to the principles of Cooperation and Politeness.
Keywords: uncertainty, risk, disorientation, globalization, fluid modernity, uncertainty reduction theory, cross-cultural discomfort

Двойственная природа феноменов неопределенности и риска в процессе межкультурной коммуникации

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Аннотация. В статье исследуются феномены неопределенности и риска, а именно их двойственная природа. Показано, что неопределенность и риск присутствуют в жизненном цикле людей. В настоящее время их важность возрастает благодаря обилию информации и цифровизации. Особое внимание уделено различным точкам зрения на эту проблему и ее характеристики. Более того, неопределенность является культурной категорией при рассмотрении типов культуры. В этой связи неопределенность и риски приобретают особую важность в процессе межкультурной коммуникации. Обозначены способы сокращения неопределенности, а именно следование принципам кооперации и вежливости.
Ключевые слова: неопределенность, риск, дезориентация, глобализация, текучая современность, теория сокращения неопределенности, межкультурный дискомфорт

Uncertainty is of great importance for all humans as it presents, on the one hand, an ontological phenomenon of human existence and, on the other hand, is a cultural category. Therefore, its double-nature influences people's everyday lifestyles and is worthy of studying and evaluating.

Uncertainty and risk are permanent components of human life, and any kind of socio-cultural reality is characterized by risk categories and ambiguity in the cases where the possibility of adequate understanding of the present and predicting the future disappears. The reason is the asymmetry of the perceived information, its interpretation and analysis in relation to the real situation. Since uncertainty and risk as concepts and states represent a categorical characteristic of all aspects of human existence, their research is interdisciplinary in nature.

The phenomenon of the uncertainty acquired particular importance in the XX century, when W. Heisenberg in 1927 discovered the principle ac-

cording to which it is possible to define any object of the material world since is possible to determine the coordinates of the object location by its impulses.

Modernization of all aspects of human life, manifested in the development of globalization, digitalization and informatization, actualizes a new perspective of socio-cultural reflection of the problem. The emphasis on the concept of uncertainty is conceptual not only in the humanitarian aspect, but also in the natural and mathematical fields.

It would seem that the post-industrial information society, representing the abundance and diversity of information, provides extensive access to its consumption and guarantees its authenticity. In fact, it is these characteristics of postindustrial reality generate uncertainty as information of communicators' disorientation. It is the increase in the amount of information, and often its redundancy, cause the violation of the communication stability, in particular, in the field of choosing the best options and the amount of information.

It should be noted that the uncertainty in the socio-cultural context is ambivalent – it reflects the perception of the social reality of the individual, that is, it is subjective. On the other hand, uncertainty is objective as a projection of destruction / change of existing socio-cultural meanings, processes, institutions [1].

F. Knight, one of the first researchers of the uncertainty phenomenon, has identified its causes: the lack of information, ignorance, accident, counteraction [2].

In other words, most of the socio-cultural processes taking place in modern social reality are characterized by varying degrees of uncertainty. These phenomena complicate or even block the possibilities of adequate solutions to ensure the stability of socio-cultural norms, contributing to the emergence of emotional instability, confusion, nervousness, and depression [3].

As N. G. Osipova notes, informatization and digitalization of the changing social reality contribute to the mixing of basic concepts of life in society, including citizenship, confessional affiliation and even gender. Individuals, receiving a variety of information that is difficult to perceive and analyze, cannot concentrate. In this case, the picture of the world is presented as a mosaic picture, which is difficult to perceive logically [4].

The greatest contribution to the study the uncertainty phenomenon was introduced by Z. Bauman that defined modern social reality as "fluid modernity» ("liquid modernity"). It is interesting to note that the first studies of uncertainty as a category of social reality were undertaken back in antiquity. So Thales, a representative of the Milet school, believed that water is not an embodiment of uncertainty because of its constant movement and variability. Aristotle in his turn, defined movement as the embodiment of uncertainty [5]. According to Z. Bauman, fluid

modernity is a transition from a structured social reality and the presence of stable institutions to the society free from obligations, boundaries and conditions. This condition is characterized by all sorts of surprises, uncertainty, inconsistency, and a person in this reality acquires social mobility and possibilities of social lifts and access to various information. Z. Bauman uses beautiful, even poetic metaphor "fluid modernity" for the characteristic of our, very complex, fluid and flexible social reality, full of risks of varying degrees of danger, on the one hand, and the great opportunities for progress, on the other.

Highlighting variability and uncertainty of fluid present, Z. Bauman identified five new characteristics of the basic concepts of human life:

– liberation as freedom from society, but also freedom of destruction of identity;

– individuality as the antipode of a citizen and encouraging consumerism and interest in the private life of people (for example, stars and politicians), and not in their activities;

– time and space as a change in these concepts in the process of electronic;

– work as a new form of employment – distance work and study outside offices and educational institutions;

– community – urbanization and the creation of megalopolises have aggravated the opposition "friend" – "alien" in the form of outbursts of nationalism, xenophobia and fascism [6].

The speed of life in the flow of liquid modernity requires the person to be in permanent tension because of such fears as "not to have time", "not to catch up", "not to get" to the detriment of self-reflection. The state of uncertainty provokes the emergence of risks as components of the life cycle. The classical definition of risk is presented as follows – "…active, conscious action of a person with the hope of good luck in conditions of uncertainty of the activity's outcome" [7, p. 96].

N. Luhmann, presenting a critical concept of the state of risk, emphasized its ontological essence and emphasized the probabilistic nature of man. In other words, N. Luhmann, in solidarity with F. Knight, thought, that risks arise by chance, and sociological perspective on this phenomenon lies in the fact that the nature of the risk to be judged in the context of communications with the inclusion of its meaning and decision taking. Thus, according to N. Luhmann, the risk is due to a person's active life position [8].

W. Beck in his research to the nature of the risks focuses on the fact that globalization accelerates and multiplies the numerous risks – natural, technological, social, economic, financial and political. In these conditions a national government, in the classical sense of the term, cannot with its duties and gives way to transnational institutions. Society, according to W. Beck becomes: "…a risk society, and the risks are multiplied all the time due to the development of science and technology. Risk is the systematic interac-

tion of society with the threats and dangers created by modernization as such. Unlike past eras, today's risks are the consequences, directly connected to the alarming power of modernization and uncertainty globalization" [9, p. 188].

According to W. Beck, globalization leads to the dominance of terrorism, environmental and socio-humanitarian disasters. He compares global terrorism to the Chernobyl of the world economy: "Nuclear waste was buried at Chernobyl, and globalization "buried" its promises to the world's salvation". He believes that the terrorists discovered not only the vulnerability and weakness of Western civilization, but also anticipated globalization economic conflicts [9, p. 21].

The concept of risk by E. Giddens postulates the riskiness of modern social reality. Risk, according to E. Giddens, is a product of modernization and globalization. But, unlike W. Beck's concept of the nature of risks, E. Giddens emphasizes its positive functions as mobilizing and dynamic forces that characterize modern society, and people do not rely on natural forces, religious dogmas and traditions, but act independently and determine their future. E. Giddens defines the social reality of postmodernity as "high modernity" full of numerous risks, uncertain situations that threaten both the whole of humanity and its individual representatives [10].

There are many classifications of risk, but 2 types are most often traced – technogenic and sociogenic risks. Technogenic risks are caused by the loss of control over production and its negative impact on the environment; sociogenic risks, in turn, are the reason for the emergence of social uncertainty due to the loss of control over social transformations on the part of society. Sociocultural risks, in turn, are due to the asymmetry of the subject's actions in relation to the transformations of society in conditions of uncertainty. In turn, the socio-cultural risks can be represented as: ethnic, military, political, financial, etc. [11].

Intercultural risks deserve special attention in the context of globalization, as they reflect the functioning of international contacts. Intercultural communication as the interaction between representatives of different cultures and different languages is always driven by their cultural identity, which is manifested in different spheres of life.

Uncertainty as a sociocultural phenomenon is present in the processes of socialization, enculturation and acculturation in the life cycle of each individual as a member of society in all spheres of his life – in other words, in a spatio-temporal context. It is known that the phenomenon of culture has the greatest number of definitions, each of which characterizes different aspects of this all-encompassing concept. From the point of view of intercultural differences, culture, according to G. Hofstede, is "collective programming of consciousness that distinguishes members of one group or types of people from others" [12, p.1 4].

Nevertheless, all cultures have universal categories that reflect the natural and social needs of individuals, namely: generally accepted value-behavioral models in such universal situations as gender relations, custody of young children, satisfaction of basic human needs for food, warmth, sex, attitude to the elderly, the sick, the disabled [12].

Currently, there are six categories of culture:
– power distance, reflecting different interpretations of inequality;
– avoidance of uncertainty, as a level of social tension in relation to the risks of uncertainty;
– and individualism / collectivism as the degree of inclusion of individuals in primary groups;
– masculinity / femininity as social roles distribution between men and women;
– long-term / short-term orientation as a focus of action either on now or on the past or on the future;
– indulgence / restraint in the form of speed of satisfaction of needs.

Turning to the phenomenon of uncertainty as a cultural characteristic, it should be noted that this cultural category reflects the degree of society's resistance to the diversity and ambiguity of sociocultural meanings. This means the method and degree of protection of members of society in the face of non-standard situations. Thus, cultures with a high level of uncertainty avoidance tend to reduce the risks arising in the process of development. For these purposes, in these types of cultures there is a regulation of behavior in the form of following the rules and norms, traditions, customs and rituals. At the same time, deviation from generally accepted opinions and truths is condemned, and sometimes punishable by law. Representatives of these cultures are characterized by increased emotionality and often experience nervous tension. On the contrary, representatives of cultures with low uncertainty avoidance are more tolerant and tolerant of the opinions of others, do not seek to introduce many rules and prohibitions, and do not experience excessive and constant emotional stress.

G. Hofstede provides a comparative table of ten differences between cultures by degree of uncertainty avoidance. Thus, a low degree of uncertainty avoidance is characterized as follows:
– acceptance of uncertainty as a vital characteristic;
– the life cycle is perceived without tension, there is self-control in society and a low level of anxiety;
– people rarely discuss their health and well-being with others;
– in society there is tolerance for deviation from the behavioral norms;
– a calm attitude towards manifestations of disorder and ambiguity is widespread;
– school teachers often say, "I don't know," and this is considered the norm;
– there is a frequent change of job, profession and place of residence;
– all norms (rules) are in doubt;

– the authorities and the people are mutually critical and rational in relation to each other;

– the dominant position in the scientific and religious spheres is occupied by relativism and empirical methodology.

As for cultures with a high level of uncertainty avoidance, their specificity is manifested in the following:

– uncertainty impedes the flow of the life cycle and requires constant struggle and overcoming;

– throughout their life, individuals constantly experience anxiety, tension and nervousness;

– members of society are prone to frequent and verbose discussions of their health and well-being with others;

– in society there is an intolerant attitude towards all manifestations of deviant behavior due to its danger;

– teachers at school do not have the right to answer, "I don't know", since confidence in their erudition is a sign of a "real" teacher;

– an intentional tendency to follow the rules, even if they themselves do not follow them;

– a lack of a rational and critical attitude towards the authorities;

– the predominance of a conservative-orthodox worldview in the scientific and religious spheres [13, p. 30].

In the modern global world, a huge role is played by the implementation of full-fledged intercultural communication, which is necessary for the normal functioning of various spheres of human life – politics, economics, science, education, etc. Lack of information about the specifics of partners as representatives of "their" culture and bearers of "their" languages is often the reason for the emergence of cultural and communicative uncertainty. Cultural uncertainty occurs in situations where communication partners cannot achieve their goals and are forced to use adaptive mechanisms to suppress feelings of dissatisfaction and alienation, thus avoiding a state of frustration.

The dichotomy "friend" – "alien" as a model of the opposition "I" – "Others" actualizes the state of uncertainty at three levels of communication:

– cognitive in the form of ignorance of the "alien" socio-cultural specifics;

– emotional as doubts and uncertainty in an adequate assessment of "their" behavior on the part of "aliens";

– behavioral in the form of indifference or aggression, or frustration towards "aliens" [14].

Uncertainty problems arising in the process of intercultural communication lead to the fact that communicants cannot realize their communicative intentions and begin to experience communicative discomfort [15, p. 212–233].

Naturally, representatives of different cultures and speakers of different languages have different worldviews, which is the reason for the emergence of communicative uncertainty. According to S. G. Ter-Minasova, these barriers are recognized by communicants only in the process of intercultural communication and are conditioned by confidence in the correctness and normality of only "their" culture [16, p. 100].

Each culture has its own discursive code in the form of conventional communicative norms for the transmission of certain socio-cultural meanings that are significant and specific for a given culture [17, p. 118]. Differences in the encoding and decoding of these meanings create intercultural ambiguity in the form of communicative discomfort. Moreover, one should distinguish between linguistic codes in the form of phonetics, vocabulary and grammar of an "alien" language and cultural codes as socio-cultural specifics of communicants. Partners of intercultural communication in most cases do not perceive a mismatch of cultural meanings "their" and "alien" culture as the cause of violation of mutual expectations. The basis of the mismatch is cultural obstacles (hindrances) in the form of asymmetry of coding and decoding of the content of intercultural interaction.

Overcoming situations of uncertainty intercultural interaction can be presented from the perspective of the Uncertainty reduction theory, which is founded upon K. Shannon's and W. Weaver's information theory. According to this theory, the emergence of communicative uncertainty is due to the expectation that a partner will use a set of behavioral schemes, and a decrease in uncertainty, on the contrary, occurs when the options for behavior are limited [18].

According to C. Berger's theory of uncertainty reduction, intercultural interaction can be successful / more successful if the partners adequately predict it before the interaction starts, and after the interaction they adequately interpret it, thus reducing / leveling the uncertainty [19].

In an intercultural context, reducing the uncertainty arising from interaction is necessary when communicants begin to experience communicative discomfort / communication failure in realizing their pragmatic goals. There are many reasons for the emergence of communicative discomfort, but all of them are caused by non-implementation of communicative contact between communication partners. In this regard, it is possible to single out some reasons for intercultural uncertainty arising from differences in the language structures of partners, their habits and pragmatic goals [20].

The level of intercultural competence of partners directly determines the level of intercultural uncertainty – the higher the level of intercultural competence, the less often situations of uncertainty arise due to psychophysical characteristics, social status and background knowledge of the communicants.

Particular attention should be paid to following the principles of Cooperation and Politeness as the best way to level the uncertainty and risks of intercultural communication.

The Principle of Cooperation uses maxims of verbal communication: quality – communication of truthful information; quantity – supply of the optimal amount of information; manners – consistency and conciseness of presentation; relevance – the relevance and objectivity of information. The Principle of Cooperation is supplemented by the Principle of Politeness, characterized by two fundamental rules: minimizing everything that is impolite, offensive and maximizing politeness in accordance with the following maxims: tact (minimum efforts of a partner with maximum of his benefits); generosity (minimum benefits for yourself and maximum of your efforts); approval (maximum approval of the partner and minimum disapproval); modesty (minimal disapproval from a partner); agreement (maximizing agreement and minimizing disagreement); sympathy (minimization of antipathy towards a partner) [21].

Thus, uncertainty as a socio-cultural phenomenon is a component of the life cycle, a characteristic of the type of culture, and the specifics of intercultural communication. In the latter case, it arises due to the lack / lack of knowledge about the peculiarities of the "alien" culture. Difficulties arising in the process of decoding "alien" meanings are characterized as intercultural uncertainty (communicative discomfort). Avoiding or reducing this type of uncertainty is possible by following the principles of Cooperation and Politeness. Uncertainty and risks are essential components of human destiny. They often serve as an obstacle and hindrance on the path of life, having a negative impact on the quality of life. The modern postmodern offers a wealth of information and frees people from responsibility and choice, creating uncertainty and increasing risks. Be that as it may, life goes on and people manage to cope with risks and uncertainties. It is important to know that uncertainty has a downside - certainty, and this gives us all hope.

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