

The present monograph advances a proposal for a more systematic study of lexical layers of cultural identity. What is proposed here is an epistemological construct which outlines lexical phenomena that profile cultural identity and the techniques that may contribute to a more systematic exploration of these phenomena. The proposal made in this book is merely an epistemological construct, that is, the only claim made about it is that it represents a convenient tool for a more comprehensive and systematic study of lexical markers of cultural identity. It is also a call for a new cultural linguistic program and, as all pioneering proposals, it only outlines a possible research direction without giving definite answers to any questions.

The review of the relevant research in the field shows that approaches such as Russian linguistic culturology, the Natural Semantic Metalanguage (NSM) theory, and cultural linguistics deserve due credit for bringing the attention of the research community to the nexus of language and culture. This was an enormous achievement in light of the fact that the dominant, so-called formal approaches, such as the minimalist program (Chomsky, 1995) or optimality theory (Kager, 1999) completely excluded these phenomena from linguistic analysis, concentrating exclusively on what is common in the languages of the world, thus mostly on syntax and phonology.

However, the “cultural turn” in linguistics leaves unresolved the following problems and consequently does not address potential areas of improvement.

- a. Isolationism: cultural practices in language are analyzed as having no connection to cross-cultural psychology and other similar approaches. For example, a well-known parameter of collectivism versus individualism is not of interest to “linguoculturologists.”
- b. Particularism: there is no connection to other fields of Slavic scholarship, e.g., the study of loanwords, which may have established certain culturally relevant distinctions in the lexicon.
- c. Elitism: this approach exaggerates the role of literature, intellectuals, etc. – some cultural features may exist in literature, or in a narrow elite group from a population, and be absent from the mental lexicons of the majority of the population.

- d. Atomism: the analysis is often overly fine-grained to be applicable; it goes into very peculiar features of one or several words.
- e. Determinism: the authors commonly postulate a possible cause of a feature, leaving no room for random events.
- f. Ethnocentrism: the authors seem to be equating an ethnic group with a particular language, like talking about Russian, or any other, national mentality, etc., while in reality every language is used by various ethnic groups with their distinct cultures.
- g. Arbitrariness: only words that supposedly prove the claim are chosen, while other cases that do not confirm the claim are disregarded.

In reaction to all the aforementioned problems, I proposed here a model comprising three lexical layers of cultural identity: the deep, the exchange, and the surface layer. The deep layer entails specific words, specific ways in which those words divide the cognitive and affective space of that given culture and the way they are connected with other words. This layer encompasses stable lexical strata where changes are only glacial and where any conscious interventions are only marginal and remote. The speakers are given those specific lexemes, distinctions, and connections, which simply shape their cultural identity without their knowledge or consent. At its core are the most common lexemes, which offer the strongest contribution to the profiling of cultural identity given that the speakers are exposed to them more frequently than to any other lexemes (no matter how culture-specific they may be).

The exchange layer comprises the lexemes resulting from cultural contacts with other people. This layer is also given to the speakers without their consent, but, unlike the deep layer, they generally have an idea about the main sources of lexical influence on their language and they can often recognize the word as being the product of such influence. What shapes a speaker's cultural profile in this layer are the features of the words (rather than the words themselves) borrowed from a certain cultural or contact environment. Some very limited possibilities of intervening in this layer exist (e.g., in the form of purist maneuvers from the surface layer), but generally, none of these interventions change the general landscape of cultural and contact influences. These influences can be stronger or weaker, depending on the concrete subject-matter field, so the distribution of fields (rather than the general core-periphery structure) is important in shaping the speakers' cultural profile.

The surface layer is the area of an unstable lexicon where cultural identity is a result of constant negotiation between linguistic elites and the general body of speakers. Practically any lexical sphere can be affected by normative intervention. The intervention is conscious, direct, and conducted by linguistic elites (such as linguists, writers, journalists, legislators). The intervention is transmitted through public discourse and the school system, to eventually meet certain attitudes by the general body of speakers, leading to their acceptance,

partial acceptance, or rejection, which gives the body of speakers ultimate control over the development of this layer. Cultures and their speakers differ in the prominence of linguistic elites and their intervention, in the strength and centrality of the attitudes of the speakers. The lexicon of the standard language is the ultimate product of this negotiation between the elites and the speakers. Speakers' cultural profile is determined by the fragmentation of this lexicon and the distance from similar standard language forms.

The present epistemological construct of the three lexical layers of identity is intended to eliminate the aforementioned shortcomings of mainstream cross-cultural anthropocentric linguistics. First, the three layers require a methodological apparatus from cross-cultural linguistics (mostly in the deep layer), contactology (i.e., the study of linguistic contacts, in the exchange layer), and lexicological sociolinguistics (in the surface layer). Second, the methodological apparatus from all three linguistic approaches should be connected to the dimensions established in cross-cultural psychology and anthropology. In addition to these three innovations, the following principles of analysis were advocated and demonstrated:

- a. Comprehensiveness: all members of the category are analyzed rather than just those individual cases that confirm research claims.
- b. Sensitivity to stakeholders complexity: the analysis distinguishes between the body of speakers and linguistic elites and sees both these entities as most diversified collectives.
- c. Multi-perspectiveness: various linguistic and extra-linguistic perspectives are brought into the analysis.
- d. Linguistic autonomism: this recognizes that languages do not necessarily have to overlap with ethnic groups and that linguistic identity concerns speakers of languages rather than members of ethnic groups.
- e. Sensitivity to linguistic complexity: this recognizes the complexity of language varieties, such as dialects and ethnic variants.
- f. Limited determinism: there is an understanding that some developments are random and the analysis can account for only a part of phenomena.
- g. Explanatory succinctness: the simplest possible explanatory tools are sought to encompass the broadest and widest fields of the phenomenon being explained.

As noted in Chapter 3, in its core, the model comprises the deep layer (which consists of relatively stable lexical distinctions and includes core research on language and culture), the exchange layer (which involves slowly evolving material from the lexical transfer between different languages and their cultures and includes linguistic contactology), and the surface layer (comprising an engineered and a refereed lexicon susceptible to rapid changes, involving sociolinguistic research). The characteristics of the three layers are presented in Table 14.1.

Table 14.1 *The characteristics of the three lexical layers of cultural identity*

Layer	Focus	Structure	Changeability	Speakers' control	Elites' presence	Intervention type
Surface	features	random	fast	real	dominant	direct
Exchange	features	thematic	slow	potential	limited	indirect
Deep	words	core-periphery	glacial	negligible	marginal	remote

All these factors within the three layers are distilled into a lexical profile of cultural identity of the speakers of any given language. There is a great deal of overlap in the content of that profile between individual speakers but also significant variation in some of its segments (see Trudgill, 2001 for more details about variation). Part of the variation will be based on factors such as the speakers' age, gender, some on factors such as the territory of their residence and ethnicity, and some part of it is governed by the factors that are too complex and unpredictable to be explained.

The speakers' lexical profile is determined by the words used in a particular culture, but not in most other cultures and their languages. Much more so than certain words (typically names of local customs, foods and drinks, musical instruments and dances, etc. with an occasional abstract concept), however, the speakers' lexical profile is shaped by the distinctions that a particular lexicon makes in the field of most common words (e.g., if the language differentiates between the words for hand and arm, older and younger brother, neck of a person and that of an animal, etc.). They are furthermore defined by the internal semantic structure of their words, e.g., whether the word *bed* extends to mean river bed, bed of flowers, etc., or not. Finally, the way the most common words connect in lexical relations (e.g., how many synonyms the word meaning 'bad' will have), participate in idioms, have association links (e.g., what the word for color 'red' is most commonly associated with) and word-formation networks (e.g., in how many derivatives, compounds, and idioms can one find the word for 'mother') also culturally profile the speakers. Various segments of the lexical cultural profile are in part expressions of broader cultural dimensions (individualism/collectivism, low/high contextualness, polychronism/monochronism, etc.). To use a very obvious example, in high-context cultures, the words for evaluating anything will have a range of contextually driven meanings, sometimes opposite from the first meaning of the word, as in using OK as an unfavorable evaluation of a meal, movie, or event. All of the aforementioned parameters are given to the speakers. They unconsciously act inside their lexical profiles without any real possibility to change anything. Similarly, any direct interventions in this lexical sphere would be destined to

fail. The variation between the speakers is relatively modest, at least in the core of the most common words and their meanings. The principal driver of the variation is the linguistic education of the speaker, the fact that some will know more words, their meanings, and the links between them than others (in common parlance this would be the difference between more or less “cultured” or “well-read” speakers).

The next two layers, exchange and surface, operate on the material of the deep layer in that lexical borrowings fill gaps in the deep-layer vocabulary or compete with its existing words and meanings, and surface-level maneuvers almost always include the deep-layer vocabulary in the maneuvers of lexical engineering and refereeing. In numerous instances, they also include the exchange layer. What is most important is that the speakers’ cultural profile is determined by the other two layers in a very different way.

What determines the speakers in the exchange layer are the features of the lexemes. First whether the feature is inherited or borrowed, and then what is the source of borrowing (cultural or contact). Another relevant feature is the subject-matter field of borrowing, as some subject-matter fields feature an increased number of borrowings from certain macrolanguage sources. This layer is then thematically organized. The distribution of macrolanguage imports in the general vocabulary and particular subject-matter fields is given to the speakers, but, unlike in the deep lexical layer of cultural identity, they are generally aware of the features that define them culturally. For example, even modestly educated speakers of all Slavic languages will be aware of the classical, Greek and Latin, origins of parts of their vocabulary; while German lexical influence will typically be known even to most uneducated strata of users of the standard language in most Slavic languages. Over a prolonged period of time and collectively, speakers have the potential of making changes in the ratio of the inherited and borrowed lexicon (e.g., by accepting a purist maneuver in the surface layer, which eventually changes the exchange layer). However, the general distribution of sources of borrowing and of their subject-matter fields are the kinds of elements that are not conducive to rapid changes. Most often, purist maneuvers, even if they are successful in enforcing an engineered word, do not expunge the borrowed one from the vocabulary – as a rule, they remain in the standard language, either with lower frequency or a limited field of usage. The changes here are faster than in the deep layer, but they are still very slow. They do not happen before our eyes as they do in the surface layer. While a loanword may enter the vocabulary abruptly and it may equally abruptly be supplanted by another word, it takes decades and most commonly generations of speakers to change general proportions in the lexicon. By the same token, the presence of elites is limited here. They may resort to macro- and micro maneuvers in the surface layer, but they cannot really change the general parameters of the exchange layers that culturally profile its

speakers (e.g., dramatically decrease the number of Near Eastern borrowings in Croatian or dramatically increase their number in Bosnian, both of which would amount to linguistic nationalism). That also means that their lexical interventions are only indirect – by direct maneuvers in the surface layers, provided that the attitudes of the general body of speakers toward them are favorable, and with the flow of time, some proportion of the features defining speakers' cultural profile in this layer might change. Even this indirect intervention is difficult to assess. For example, the proportion of Near Eastern words in today's Serbo-Croatian (and its Bosnian variant which claims principal cultural heritage to this lexical sphere) is considerably smaller than a century ago. However, it is difficult to say how much of that change is a result of the conscious interventions of the elites (including a general pro-European orientation, ironically enough, triggered in part by Kemalist reforms in Turkey) and how much of it is a consequence of simple obsolescence of the entities that were named with these words (such as old trades and their tools, meals, customs).

The surface layer, unlike the previous two, is a place of abrupt changes in consequence of negotiation between interventionist elites and the general body of speakers. These changes can happen practically anywhere in the lexical system. Just as in the exchange layer, what contributes to the cultural profile of speakers are features of the lexemes – this time those that exclude them from the standard lexicon, restrict them to only some genres or speech situations, or exclude them from the lexicon of the standard language. Speakers are keenly aware of the changes in this layer and they take an active stance toward them. The layer is dominated by the elites and their direct interventions, but the speakers enjoy true agency and eventually have the final say on which macro maneuver is going to take hold. What comes about as an ultimate consequence of this negotiation between the elites and the speakers is a particularly shaped lexicon of the standard language. In the surface layer, speakers are culturally defined by their range of possibilities of accepting and rejecting interventionist maneuvers (which may be weaker or stronger, unified or fragmented, etc., depending on the standard language and its culture). Speakers are also defined by the features of their particular standard language lexicon. Thus, a speaker of Czech is defined by how strictly he/she enforces the difference between standard and common Czech and also by the fact that standard Czech is closely related and defined in a way by common Czech. A speaker of the Croatian variant of Serbo-Croatian is defined by his/her possibilities in accepting or rejecting the use of the so-called proper standard Croatian lexemes. These most often include avoiding forms that Croatian has in common with Serbian, in those cases where there is a specific Croatian word. This speaker is also determined by the fact that the Croatian variant is defined by its relationship with other variants of Serbo-Croatian.

What should have become evident from the nine core chapters of this book and the present review of the main findings is that the cultural identity of a speaker of any language is defined by a considerably broader range of factors than key words, cultural scripts and concepts, etc. A speaker is defined by the distinctions within his/her core lexicon (which includes the aforementioned keywords, scripts, and concepts). At the same time the speaker's cultural identity is determined by the cultural influences and neighboring languages that have contributed to the lexicon of their language and by their negotiation of the interventionist elite maneuvers. All this should be included in the speakers' lexical profile of their cultural identity. It should also be clear by now that there is a range of research techniques and readily available lexical datasets that have the potential to make important contributions to our understanding of the lexical layers of cultural identity.

Throughout the present monograph, I have used examples from Slavic languages. Along with demonstrating the points about the factors that are lexically profiling speakers' cultural identity, the goal of these examples was to show that Slavic studies in lexicology and linguistics still make sense. As should have become apparent, especially from the examples in the deep layer, the idea of Slavdom (discussed at length in Chapter 1) still plays a role in the cultural profiling of each particular Slavic language – there are wide ranges of overlapping inherited lexicon, there are closer or more distant patterns of continuation and change between various Slavic languages, there are shared sources of cultural influences, and so on. Perhaps more importantly, in a great body of Slavic dictionaries and lexicological monographs there is a wealth of readily available data that can be explored in elucidating the lexical layers of cultural identity of the speakers of Slavic languages. Their number and variety were considerably richer before the process of dissolving traditional philology into general linguistics on the material of Slavic languages and comparative literature (again, using Slavic writers). Nevertheless, their influx is steady even in this day and age. Perhaps the time is ripe to solve the dilemma of having Slavic departments and organizations across the English-speaking world but no consistent research traditions of Slavic studies in linguistics. What I hope to have shown is that Slavic studies offers almost endless research possibilities in elucidating lexical layers of cultural identity. What I hope to encourage is the idea that Slavic departments and organizations become venues for Slavic linguistic research, rather than Slavic languages serving only as a source of examples for research on general linguistic problems.