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THE COGNITIVE ILLUSION AS A MECHANISM OF COMMUNICATIVE ACCOMMODATION (AN ANALYSIS OF THE ENGLISH-LANGUAGE COMMEMORATIVE DISCOURSE)

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Aim. To reveal means of verbalizing the cognitive illusion as a mechanism of social consolidation in commemorative discourse, i.e. a combination of language-mediated social practices of collective remembrance.

Methodology. The research material is 800 small-format online texts of English-language commemorative discourse published from 2019 to 2024 by British, American, and Canadian politicians. The methods of the componential, conceptual, categorial, and cognitive-matrix analysis are used to model the "collective memory" as the central conceptual structure of commemorative discourse. The functioning of the mechanism of the cognitive illusion in commemorative discourse is described within the framework of Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT).

Results. It is found that the cognitive illusion is the key mechanism of consolidation in commemorative discourse in that it helps to create and maintain a "virtual museum of collective memory" essential to the social group's identity. The "collective memory" can be represented as a matrix centred around the "otherness – sameness" conceptual opposition. The matrix brings together two main cognitive contexts with a permeable boundary between them – that of "Past/Future" and that of "Present". The cognitive illusion helps to transcend the boundary between the two cognitive contexts through a system of "biases" (perspectives of interpretation), whose functioning gets explained in terms of CAT, in particular convergence and divergence.

Research implications. The article suggests a methodology for a joint cognitive-linguistic and communicative analysis and modeling of a virtual space which facilitates transmission of socially significant ideas in institutional discourse.

Keywords: cognitive illusion, cognitive mechanisms, collective memory, commemorative discourse, Communication Accommodation Theory, heterotopia, paremia

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Научная статья

КОГНИТИВНАЯ ИЛЛЮЗИЯ КАК МЕХАНИЗМ КОММУНИКАТИВНОЙ АККОМОДАЦИИ (НА МАТЕРИАЛЕ АНГЛОЯЗЫЧНОГО КОММЕМОРАТИВНОГО ДИСКУРСА)

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Аннотация

Цель. Выявить средства вербализации когнитивной иллюзии как механизма консолидации в коммеморативном дискурсе (дискурсе коллективного памятования).

Процедура и методы. На материале 800 англоязычных интернет-текстов с помощью методов компонентного, концептуального, категориального и когнитивно-матричного анализа строится модель «коллективной памяти» как центральной концептуальной структуры коммеморативного дискурса. Функционирование когнитивной иллюзии описывается с точки зрения теории коммуникативной аккомодации.

Результаты. Установлено, что когнитивная иллюзия – это ключевой механизм консолидации в коммеморативном дискурсе, создающий «виртуальный музей» коллективной памяти. Коллективная память представлена как ядерно-периферийная матрица, на элементы которой воздействует система когнитивных «ракурсов» интерпретации.

Теоретическая и/или практическая значимость. Предлагается методика лингвокогнитивного и коммуникативного анализа и моделирования виртуального пространства в институциональном дискурсе.

Ключевые слова: когнитивная иллюзия, когнитивные механизмы, коллективная память, коммеморативный дискурс, теория коммуникативной аккомодации, гетеротопия, паремия

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Introduction

In view of the recent sociocultural processes consolidation has risen to prominence as one of the major communicative aims in institutional discourse. The cognitive mechanisms of consolidation usually constitute an object of interdisciplinary political or psychological research (like political semiotics, political communication, memory studies, etc.) [1]. They are yet to be given more attention in linguistics, being primarily studied within research into the cognitive grounds

of time/space representation [1; 2] and the “own – alien” opposition [3].

One of the least scientifically elaborated cognitive mechanisms facilitating consolidation is, to our mind, that of the cognitive illusion. Up to now it has largely been treated as a purely psychological phenomenon akin to the optical illusion (hence the name) and as such falls solely into the realm of psychology, specifically social or cognitive psychology [4]. In linguistics the cognitive illusion has not been terminologized and is usually

equated with the cognitive distortion or the cognitive dissonance. In cognitive linguistics, in particular, illusions are mainly studied within broader research into cognitive patterns and perceptual errors [2; 3; 5; 6; 7; 8; 9]. In both, psychology and linguistics, the cognitive illusion is most often attributed the status of a problem that awaits a solution: being regarded as a deviation from the “norm”, it is proclaimed irrational, delusive and/or error-provoking. Therefore, most of the existing research on cognitive illusions seeks to suggest practical ways of preventing and solving them [4]. Moreover, it is noteworthy that the general approach to the cognitive illusion in either discipline can be described as an entertaining denunciation of cognitive fallacies, rather than a profound analysis of their possible social implications and applicability in institutional discourse. The potential of the cognitive illusion as a tool of socio-communicative impact (be it positive or negative), namely its ability to affect human conduct through shaping (possibly, manipulating) perception of reality, remains understudied, giving way to a more entertaining perspective.

In the current paper we suggest and employ a definition of the cognitive illusion that dissociates from its solely negative connotation and brings out its controllability and dependability on the contextual framework. By the term “cognitive illusion”, which is believed to have been introduced by the mathematician P.-S. marquis de Laplace in the XIX c. [10], we mean a cognitive mechanism that shapes a certain understanding of reality through implementation of contextually motivated bias in its representation. The word “bias” we interpret as a perspective of interpretation rather than a distortion.

The topicality of the research is determined by the necessity to expand the knowledge of the cognitive illusion as a cognitive mechanism of communicative impact to be implemented in institutional discourse.

The novelty of the current research consists in that, first, it looks at the cognitive illusion from the cognitive linguistic perspective

as a separate complex mechanism different from that of cognitive distortion or cognitive dissonance; second, the cognitive illusion is not approached as a harmful impediment to “normal” perception, but rather as a targeted and adjustable tool of communicative impact with the final end of consolidation in society; third, an attempt is made to explain the cognitive illusion through Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT) in treating it as a mechanism of communicative attunement to the recipient.

The present paper aims to reveal means of verbalizing the cognitive illusion as a mechanism which facilitates social consolidation in commemorative discourse within the realm of institutional discourse. Under commemorative discourse hereinafter we understand “a combination of language-mediated social practices of preservation, promotion and transfer of the heritage of the past” [9, c. 31]. To reach the given aim several tasks are to be accomplished: 1) to define the cognitive illusion as a separate cognitive mechanism distinct from related ones like that of cognitive distortion or cognitive dissonance; 2) to model the “collective memory” as the central conceptual structure of commemorative discourse with the help of the cognitive-matrix analysis; 3) to explain the functioning of the cognitive illusion in terms of CAT; 4) to describe and systematize the typical verbal means of the cognitive illusion in commemorative discourse.

The research material is 800 small-format (up to 280 characters) texts of English-language commemorative discourse published online from 2019 to 2024 by British, American, and Canadian politicians. The texts were extracted from the personal digital files of the author of the given article. The choice of commemorative discourse as research material is motivated by its markedly expressed communicative orientation towards consolidation. The term “commemoration” (from Latin *com-* + *memorare* = “together” + “mention”¹) itself manifests that consoli-

¹ Commemoration. In: *Online Etymology Dictionary*. URL: <https://www.etymonline.com/word/commemoration> (accessed: 28.10.2024).

dation could be a prerequisite as much as a projected result of the practice of collective remembrance it refers to.

The research methods employed in the current paper include the general scientific methods of analysis, synthesis, observation, description, comparison etc. The componential, conceptual, and categorial analysis and the cognitive-matrix types of analysis were used to describe and model the conceptual structure of “collective memory” underlying commemoration. The definitional, contextual, linguopragmatic, linguostylistic, and discourse types of analysis were used to reveal means of verbalizing the cognitive illusion in commemorative discourse. The material was selected with the help of the continuous sampling technique.

Theoretical background

The cognitive illusion: definition and functioning

In psychology the cognitive illusion falls under the umbrella category of perceptual illusions (alongside optical ones), which are objects of the interdisciplinary human judgement and decision-making study. Within its framework one of the key research approaches to explaining cognitive illusions is the so-called “heuristics and biases” programme, suggested by the psychologists A. Tversky and D. Kahneman in the early 1970s [11]. The underlying idea of the programme is that in conditions of uncertainty human judgement and decision-making is guided by a limited number of rules of thumb called “heuristic principles” whose primary aim is to help break down complex thinking tasks into simpler ones. Though generally effective, the heuristic principles can lead to unconscious and systematic distortions of reality, for which the authors for the first time introduced the term “cognitive biases”, now widely used in social psychology [11]. It is knowledge of the heuristics and biases that can help to prevent cognitive errors and rationalize human thinking.

Hailed as trailblazing from its onset, the “heuristics and biases” programme relies on certain ideas anticipated a century and a half before by the mathematician P.-S. marquis de Laplace in his “A Philosophical Essay on Probabilities” of 1825 [10]. Not only did P.-S. Laplace introduce the term “illusion” to refer to errors of judgement, but also described some of them before they were experimentally demonstrated in psychology much later [11; 12].

In accordance with the programme cognitive illusions have the following defining characteristics. They are: 1) errors in that they contradict reality, or the accepted “norm”; 2) systematic, hence predictable; 3) unconscious, hence impossible or hard to avoid or reduce; 4) shared by most members of a culture; 5) appealing despite being recognized as errors [4, p. 7; 12, p. 171]. The fifth characteristic is especially important to the development of the “heuristics and biases” programme, since it is recognition of the “enduring appeal” of an error that made the authors arrive at introspection as a productive mode of testing propositions for possible cognitive illusions [12, p. 171].

In this paper we propose to define the cognitive illusion as a cognitive mechanism that aims to facilitate a certain understanding of reality through a set of generally accepted biases functioning in the given contextual framework. A bias, in its turn, is hereinafter understood by us as an externally set perspective of interpretation rather than a distortion or an error. The reinterpretation of the term “bias” in the current paper is meant to draw a demarcation line between the cognitive illusion and the related terms of “cognitive distortion” and “cognitive dissonance”.

In line with the aim of our research it is essential to emphasize that, unlike a cognitive distortion, generally understood in psychology as a “faulty or inaccurate thinking, perception, or belief”¹, a cognitive illusion as

¹ Cognitive Distortion. In: *APA Dictionary of Psychology*. URL: <https://dictionary.apa.org/cognitive-distortion> (accessed: 28.10.2024).

such is devoid of such negative connotation. It is more accurate to say that it pertains to creating a “virtual reality” through setting a certain perspective of interpretation and, as stated above, can be appealing and sought-for. Thus, the essence of the cognitive illusion can be encapsulated in the “how you look shapes what you see” formula.

Cognitive dissonance, according to L. Festinger’s theory of 1957, is the feeling of unpleasant psychological tension resulting from inconsistency between the elements of a human’s cognitive system, which usually stimulates an individual to search for ways to bring them into correspondence with each other and reality [13, p. 11]. Though cognitive dissonance is not altogether excluded as an effect of the cognitive illusion, the two mechanisms are yet different in that the latter, unlike the former, is, first, generative rather than resultant in character, second, not inherently unpleasant or negative, and, third, often unconscious, hence, sometimes unavoidable. Therefore, the cognitive illusion is mainly different from cognitive dissonance in that it seeks to create a “virtual reality” that, though being inconsistent with the non-virtual one, is not perceived as a problem of cognition, since it is either sought-for or impossible to avoid or both.

Bearing in mind the close association between the cognitive illusion and the optical one, let us explain the functioning of the former through an analogy with the latter. As a concrete example we will be using the famous checker shadow illusion by E. H. Adelson¹. The viewer is offered an image of a checkerboard with a cylinder shadowing its certain area. A square outside the shadow and a square inside are marked “A” and “B” respectively. The task is to determine which of the two is the darker. The illusion is that the A-labeled square appears to be darker than the B-labeled square, though, in fact, they are the same shadow of grey. Within the task the misperception of the colour is

not to be treated as a defect of vision, since the human eye, unlike a photometer, is not by default pre-adjusted to take into account certain parameters, like exposure and the angle of observation. The parameters are set by the task itself and form a context in which a judgement is to be made, which biases the viewer to a certain answer, in this case erroneous. It is noteworthy that even after learning the correct answer the perception of the colour does not change for most people, which evidences the unconsciousness and appeal of cognitive illusions.

To our mind, the checker shadow illusion draws upon the “proximity” bias which leads our brain to predict patterns based on the alignment of objects: if a checkerboard follows a certain pattern, then A is automatically expected to be darker than B [14, p. 13]. The bias would be unfeasible without background knowledge of the survival mechanism underlying the erroneous perception: in the course of the evolution the human brain adapted to single out potential threats hidden in the shadow.

To sum up, the work of the cognitive illusion mechanism consists in that one sets certain parameters to bias the recipient’s perception of reality in the desired direction. The prerequisite for a cognitive illusion is knowledge of the heuristics and biases of human thinking.

A heterotopia as a spatial setting for the cognitive illusion

Research into the cognitive illusion in communication, in our opinion, should be embedded in the recent “**spatial turn**” in the humanities, which found its way into cognitive linguistics as a trend to study discourse in the capacity of “a type of language description in a multidimensional space with a flexible coordinate system, including the parameter of time (translated by author – E. M.)” [6, c. 122]. The idea of space should be commented on since it gives an insight into one of the key notions of human cognition, namely that of categorization. Being closely associated with the basic cognitive functions like

¹ Adelson, E. H. (1995). Checker Shadow Illusion. Perceptual Science Group. MIT. URL: <https://persci.mit.edu/gallery/checkershadow> (accessed: 28.10.2024).

memory, imagination and attention, categorization serves to organize and systematize knowledge of the world into groups based on the criterion of similarity/dissimilarity. As pointed out by E. S. Kubryakova, one of the ways to determine whether objects are similar or different is to compare them as “entireties” (translated by author – E. M.), from which space stands out as the largest-scale and the most vital to world perception and all human activity [7, c. 465]. E. S. Kubryakova believes that the image of space has transformed with time, growing more and more abstract, and gives the following definition to the “initial” cognitive structure behind it, upheld by the archaic human: “a generalized idea of an integrated whole between the sky and the ground (entirety), which is observable, visible and tangible (sensory-based), which a human feels a part of and inside of which they can freely move themselves or move objects within their control; a continuity spread out in all directions, which the human’s eye scans and which is available to them in the form of a field of view when covered panoramically, observed and scrutinized (translated by author – E. M.)” [7, c. 466]. The contemporary conceptual structure denoted by the word “space”, having genetically developed from the “initial” one, does not contradict it, but rather draws upon its concepts, adjusts them to modern reality and adds new concepts, e.g. the idea of multidimensionality, virtuality, flexibility, openness, etc.

Within the framework of postmodernism the present period of time is characterized as “irreferential”, meaning that referentials are being lost and replaced with the so-called “simulacra”, i.e. signs representing something that does not exist in reality [15]. Having replaced the referentials, simulacra produce other simulacra and, all brought together, they form a special kind of “virtual” sign-symbolic space, termed “hyperreality” by J. Baudrillard [15]. A vivid example of “hyperreality” is, to his mind, Disneyland – an artificial space filled with “a play of illusions and phantasms”, which is designed to

make visitors believe that the environment outside is real, though in terms of referentiality it is no longer so [15, p. 12]. The main property of hyperreality consisting in filledness with simulacra we will be calling simulacrativity.

The notion of hyperreality as a simulacrative space is closely associated with the concept of “**heterotopia**”, elaborated by M. Foucault in “The Order of Things” (1966) and “Of Other Spaces” (1967). Heterotopias were contrasted by him to utopias and defined as “places which are absolutely *other* (italicized by M. F.) with respect to all the arrangements that they reflect and of which they speak” [16, p. 332]. The concept of “**otherness**”, implying difference and strangeness¹, is core to heterotopias, since their primary aim is to serve as a “counter-arrangement” to a real arrangement, i.e. at one and the same time to represent, challenge and overturn it [16]. M. Foucault points out that, though being virtual (in the sense of lying outside all the existing places), heterotopias are “localizable” and represent a “mixed experience” pertaining to both, reality and utopias [16]. The simplest example given by him is a mirror, which is at once a utopia in that it represents a “placeless place”, an unreal, virtual space [16, p. 336], and a heterotopia in that it is a real object serving as a “portal” to the unreal, virtual space. Other examples are spaces produced by social institutions like boarding schools, cemeteries, gardens, theatres, museums, libraries, prisons, ships, etc. It is conspicuous that, following the general tendency towards simulacrativity and heightened competition within and between institutions, there is currently an urge for institutional discourse to produce new, heterotopic discourse to serve as a “better” environment to their target audience, thus ensuring higher operational and communicative efficiency and competitiveness.

¹ Otherness. In: *Oxford Learner's Dictionaries*. URL: <https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/definition/english/otherness?q=otherness> (accessed: 28.10.2024).

M. Foucault came up with six principles of heterotopias. First, every culture of the world creates heterotopias. Second, each heterotopia has a certain function which can be changed over time to meet the needs of society. Third, a heterotopia can juxtapose several incompatible spaces in one real place. Fourth, heterotopias are linked to “heterochronisms”, i.e. bits of time, and start to fully function only “when men find themselves in a sort of total breach of their traditional time” [16, p. 334]. M. Foucault points out that the modern outlook of Western culture is characterized by the tendency to accumulate time in one place that is itself “outside time”, i.e. not subject to wear and tear, hence the popularity of museums and libraries [Ibid.]. The fifth principle states that “heterotopias always presuppose a system of opening and closing” which, on the one hand, isolates them and, on the other hand, “makes them penetrable” [16, p. 335]. It is mentioned that usually an individual does not get into a heterotopia by their own will – one is either forced into it (like in the case of the prison) or is allowed to enter it after “rites of purification”, meaning a ritualized entrance procedure [Ibid.]. Yet another type of heterotopias is those that appear to be easily penetrable but that are, in fact, illusions since one gets excluded through the sole act of entering. The sixth principle pertains to the two polar functions a heterotopia has in relation to reality. A heterotopia may either aim to create “a space of illusion”, exposing every real space as more illusory, or create a more perfect space, compensating for the flaws in reality, hence the corresponding names – “heterotopias of illusion” and “heterotopias of compensation” [Ibid.].

Commemorative discourse is, to our mind, a vivid example of heterotopic discourse, as it is centred around the abstract topos of “collective memory”, represented as a “virtual museum” of historically and culturally significant signs and symbols (figures, events, objects). The perception of “collective memory” as a place rather than an object or event is reflected in the Cambridge Eng-

lish Corpus: “**the place** (marked in bold by author – E. M.) where knowledge is stored and can be retrieved for team design and collective learning”¹. Since the “exhibited items” usually pertain to different times, bringing together the present, the past and the future, it is possible to speak of a “commemorative heterochronism”. The “virtual museum” has, as a first approximation, two main entrance criteria – a technical one, consisting in the access to the real platform where the commemorative practice takes place, and a sociocultural one, which is having the expected historical, cultural and linguistic background knowledge. The heterotopia of commemoration, in our opinion, performs both possible functions – first, creating an illusion that we term “unity and continuity” and, second, compensating for the gaps in reality, i.e. loss of historical memory and lack of common ground.

In the current paper we deal with how consolidation is communicated through the mechanism of the cognitive illusion within the heterotopia of “collective memory”. As a framework for explanation, we chose Communication Accommodation Theory.

Communication Accommodation Theory

Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT) is a theory of communication developed by H. Giles in 1971 [17]. It proceeds from the idea that in the course of communication interactants adjust, or accommodate, their communicative behaviour to each other to calibrate the social distance between them. CAT, thus, is a framework “aimed at predicting and explaining many of the adjustments individuals make to create, maintain, or decrease social distance in interaction” [17, p. 293]. CAT concerns such aspects of communication as the adjustment strategies and types, the motivation for adjustments and their consequences.

Depending on whether the participants act from their personal or social identities,

¹ The Cambridge English Corpus. URL: <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/collective-memory> (accessed: 28.10.2024).

communication is studied as either interpersonal or intergroup. Initially a sociopsychological model focusing on linguistic features (esp. accents) in intercultural communication, CAT developed into an interdisciplinary model covering linguistic as well as nonverbal and extralinguistic features like body language, dressing style, eating patterns, etc.

It is noteworthy that CAT largely draws upon Social Identity Theory (SIT) proposed by H. Tajfel and J. Turner in the early 1970s, which seeks to explain how a sense of group membership, or social identity, influences the behaviour of individuals (“interpersonal” behaviour) and groups (“intergroup” behaviour) [18]. SIT posits that based on the feeling of belonging there are two types of social groups – an “in-group”, which an individual identifies with, and an “out-group”, which an individual does not identify with [18]. It is natural for an individual to seek to maintain a positive social image, both individual and collective. Hence, people tend to focus on the positive aspects of the in-group and defocus the negative ones, and vice versa, to focus on the negative aspects of the out-group(s) and to defocus the positive ones. The inclination to place the positive in-group identity over the interests of the out-group(s) is believed to lie at the core of intergroup conflict.

SIT suggests that interpersonal behaviour and intergroup behaviour form a continuum along which social behaviour may vary. One of the dimensions of the “interpersonal-intergroup continuum” is formed by individuals’ two extreme belief systems about “the nature and the structure of the relations between social groups in their society” – “social mobility” and “social change” [18, p. 9]. Social mobility relies on the idea that society is permeable and, if a person is not satisfied with their current standing, it is possible for them to change their social membership by leaving their in-group for an out-group (the “social elevator” effect, the term was first introduced by P. Sorokin). Social change, on the opposite, accentuates “marked social stratification” and implies

that it is hard or impossible to change one’s social membership [18, p. 11]. The two belief systems attribute the role of the agent differently – to an individual and an in-group respectively. While in the social mobility system it is the individual who initiates the change using their talent, connections, hard work, etc., in the social change system it is the in-group that acts collectively to improve its status, e.g. through rights movements.

The two belief systems determine the communicative strategy used by the agent to change their social status, meaning place in the social hierarchy. SIT proposes three of them: individual mobility, social competition, and social creativity [18]. While the first one refers to individual effort, the other two involve group action. Social competition means that a group seeks to positively differentiate itself from an out-group through explicit competition with it along the criteria that are, in fact, set by the out-group. Social creativity, in its turn, suggests that a group tries to achieve positive differentiation by changing its perception of its standing against the out-group: redefining or replacing the comparison criteria, the values, or even finding another out-group for comparative reference.

In both, interpersonal and intergroup communication the salience of in-group distinctive features constituting one’s social identity is important to understanding the extent of communicative accommodation between interactants. As enshrined in one of the basic principles of CAT, an interactant may either move towards others by defocusing his/her in-group features and taking on a varying number of out-group features (up to total assimilation) or move away from others by making his/her in-group features salient. The “movement towards and away from others” constitutes two opposite communication strategies – the **convergence strategy** and the **divergence strategy** respectively [17, p. 295]. The strategies aim to signal, first, interactants’ attitude to each other and, second, the extent of the social distance between them [17, p. 294]. Convergence and

divergence constitute the phenomenon of accommodation itself. They can take on different forms depending on the social value (upward / downward), degree (full / partial), symmetry (symmetrical / asymmetrical), modality (unimodal / multimodal) and duration of behaviour (short-term / long-term) [19, pp. 37–39].

Commemorative discourse, as explicated in the name itself, hinges on convergence as a premise for collective remembrance. What makes it distinct from all other possible sorts of discourse is its central conceptual structure of “collective memory”, which is to be taken into account when analyzing commemorative communication with the help of CAT. It should be pointed out that we find it more accurate to categorize “collective memory” as a conceptual structure, but not a concept, because it contains more particular concepts like “shared”, “past” or “culture”¹ and, thus, is more likely a way of organizing them within one domain.

In online communication convergence is largely determined by two factors – first, the technical mediation through the channel of communication, second, the peculiarities of computer / Internet discourse. As the research material of the current paper is made up of online texts, the convergence in the commemorative discourse under analysis is expected to be mainly asymmetrical (not expecting convergence in response, given the mass character of the audience, the indirectness of communication and the delay in feedback), multimodal (tapping into different tools of the online platform to achieve efficiency, most frequently simultaneous use of verbal text, video and pictures) and short-term (the “here and now” effect of online interaction, taking into account the modern “clip thinking”).

Below we will present some results of research into how convergence and divergence are employed to create a cognitive illusion in online commemorative discourse.

Research results

Analysis of the empirical material yielded that the cognitive illusion is the key mechanism of creating and maintaining the heterotopia of “collective memory” in commemorative discourse. To understand how the cognitive illusion helps to achieve the communicative aim of social consolidation in commemorative discourse, it is necessary, first, to reveal the cognitive components involved in the construction of the final product of the “collective memory” heterotopia. We believe that, since heterotopias are complex discourse formations of secondary order (being mainly created by institutional discourse), it is possible to model them using the relatively new method of cognitive-matrix analysis developed by N. N. Boldyrev.

Based on R. Langacker’s understanding of the matrix as a “collection of cognitive domains” [5, p. 147], the cognitive-matrix analysis aims to explain conceptually complex formats of knowledge, such as complex concepts or discourse. The product of the cognitive-matrix analysis is a cognitive matrix as a model and a complex format of knowledge, “a unit of multi-aspectual cognition” consisting of “a system of connected cognitive contexts” [8, c. 14].

N. N. Boldyrev and V. V. Alpatov distinguish between two structural types of the cognitive matrix depending on its mode of representation – “general” and “particular” (translated by author – E. M.) [8, c. 6–7]. The general matrix seeks to represent cognitive contexts that are complex knowledge in themselves, e.g. the words “human”, “society”, “nature”. The particular matrix usually incorporates the general matrix and is represented as a “core – periphery” model, with “the core” being the object of thought and the different cognitive contexts for its understanding forming “the periphery” (“the components (the cells of the matrix)”) [8, c. 7]. The general matrix usually only incorporates obligatory components, while the particular one has at least two obligatory components from the general one, the rest being optional.

¹ Collective memory. In: *The Free Dictionary*. URL: <https://www.thefreedictionary.com/collective+memory> (accessed: 28.10.2024).

As the authors propose, particular matrices lie at the root of understanding certain culturally marked names (place, dialect, precedent names) [8].

The cognitive context of the “collective memory” structure, to our mind, can be represented as a particular cognitive matrix (Fig. 1). The core is the “otherness – sameness” opposition forming two main mirrored cognitive contexts – that of “Past / Future” and “Present” respectively. The subdivision is grounded in that the past and the future, unlike the present, have the same “unreal” status. The boundary between the contexts is made permeable through the mechanism of the cognitive illusion, which serves as a driving force to facilitate diffusion between the two contexts and, thus, dynamize the matrix. As a result, demarcation between the “real” and “unreal”, “the past” and “the present” gets blurred and the participants of commemoration step into a heterotopia. The two main contexts are subdivided into minor ones, also mirrored, serving as focal

points for the work of the cognitive illusion: “I=We” – “They”, “Here” – “There”, and “Now” – “Then”, referring respectively to the participants, place and time of commemoration.

The cognitive illusion in action is, to our mind, to be called “**unity and continuity**”, the “unity” component representing the horizontal dimension of the matrix and the “continuity” component representing the vertical dimension (the link between the present, the past and the future). The actual functioning of the cognitive illusion is carried out through the focal points via a system of biases which influence certain parts of the matrix where the focal points are “pinned”.

As a result of the research we revealed the following biases associated with the contexts of the matrix, the names mainly derived from works in social psychology [4; 14]: the “proximity” bias – for the borderline between the two main contexts of “Past/Future” and “Present”, the “labeling” bias for either of them, the “association” bias for the

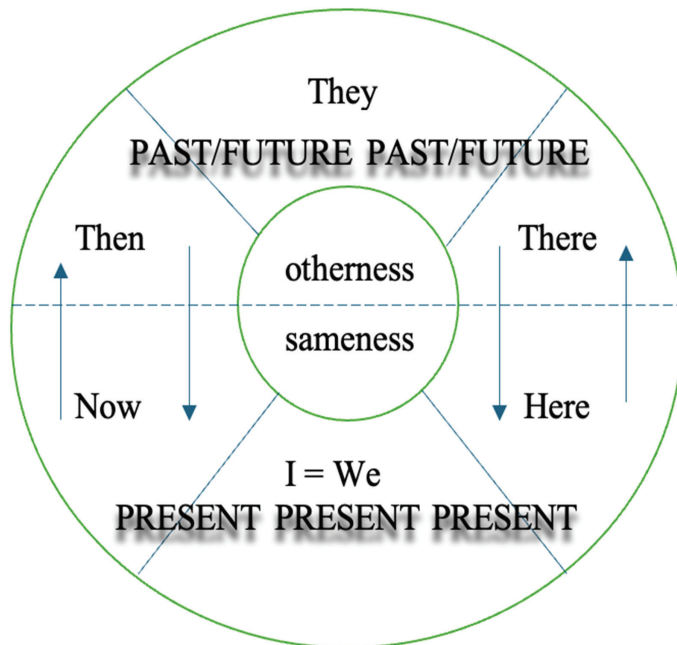


Fig. 1 / Рис. 1. The cognitive matrix of the “collective memory” heterotopia / Когнитивная матрица гетеротопии «коллективная память»

Source: drawn up by the author.

“I=We” – “They” contexts, where the personal gets merged with the collective and “They” refers to the same in-group but existing in the past/the future, the “orientation” bias for the “Here” – “There” contexts, and the “stability or change” bias for the “Now” – “Then” contexts.

The actual application of the biases is guided by the processes of convergence and divergence meant to comply with CAT. Since the main principle of a heterotopia is mirroring reality, the peculiarity of communicative convergence and divergence does not consist in moving towards or away from an objectively existing out-group, but rather in moving towards or away from the same in-group but compartmentalized in the two “realities” (the present-time in-group or the past/future-time in-group). Thus, within the framework of CAT divergence and convergence in commemorative discourse are **introspective** in nature, aimed at the “past or future self”. Having focused on the cognitive illusion as explained through CAT, we will be highlighting the “inward” direction of accommodation (from the “in-group” towards and away from the same “in-group” in the past/future). This is not to say that the “outward” accommodation does not take place in commemorative discourse. For example, convergence is employed to pass commemoration as a celebration to lure more people into the process. Divergence is also possible, esp. through contrasting the in-group in question to some real out-group if there is a need to uphold the in-group’s isomorphism “horizontally”.

Let us demonstrate and illustrate each bias with a special focus on its verbalization.

First, the “**proximity**” bias means that the demarcation lines between the contexts of “Past/Future” and “Present” get blurred because the participants, place and time of commemoration converge through being represented as physically and/or metaphorically close to each other, available for sensory perception, hence real. Convergence is achieved through bringing together the main time planes – the past, the present and

the future. In the following post by US Vice President Kamala Harris of 13.02.2024 the Afro-American heritage is represented as eternal in its contributing to the present, the past and the future. The present-time plane is marked with the adverbial modifier of time in combination with the precedent name *During the Black History Month*, the Present Indefinite verb forms *tell*, *stand*, the noun *present* pertaining to the lexico-semantic group of “present” and the adverbial modifier of time *every day*. The past is verbalized with nouns pertaining to the lexico-semantic group of “past” (*past*, *history*) and the paremia (ethnolinguocultural sententious set expression) *upon whose broad shoulders we stand*. The future is marked by the corresponding noun *future*.

During Black History Month, we tell the stories of the heroes of our past – upon whose broad shoulders we stand – and the heroes of the present, who create history every day while shaping our future¹.

The proximity of the time planes creates an illusion of a vectorized continuum unfolding from the present to the future through the past, which appears to be a widespread pattern of temporal organization in commemorative discourse.

A propping mechanism of the cognitive illusion in conveying proximity is **reification** (Latin *res* – “thing”) understood as a human’s cognitive ability to reconceptualize abstract notions in terms of material objects [20, c. 62]. In the example above reification is achieved through the forms of the verbs of sensory perception *tell* and *shaping*, pertaining to the organs of speech and touch respectively, which creates an illusion of reachability and tangibility of the otherwise abstract notion of heroism.

Another vivid means of verbalization is the use of material symbols of memory accepted in the given culture like monuments, candles, wreaths, poppies, etc. Most often the symbols are not seen as separate material ob-

¹ Source: the digital files of the author of the given paper – E. M.

jects, but are action-related, accompanied by verbs, which again testifies to the tendency to “sensorize” the commemoration procedure. In the following post by the Prime Minister of Canada Justin Trudeau of 05.09.2022 the *flag* and the *Peace Tower* symbols and the dynamic verb *will be flown* constitute a verbalized visualization of the long-established commemorative procedure of flying a flag in memory of the dead, which conveys the feeling of involvement to the reader.

Today and tomorrow, the flag on the Peace Tower will be flown at half-mast – in memory of those who lost their lives during yesterday’s attacks in Saskatchewan, and in solidarity with everyone affected by this violence. All Canadians are there for you¹.

The “**labeling**” bias pertains to the axiological sphere of commemorative discourse. The bias consists in attributing certain culturally accepted labels to the figures and events of the past/the future and the present. The labeling can serve both, convergence and divergence, depending on whether the purpose is to associate with or dissociate from the past/future. The most frequent patterns in commemorative discourse are the following: first, to bring up a tragic past event/acknowledge the mistakes of the past by labeling certain events as “evil” and to call for avoiding their repetition in the future by labeling the present as opposingly “good” for the awareness of the “evil” and, possibly, for action towards its prevention; second, to point out/acknowledge the “evil” in the present (a problem or a challenge) and look for a “good” role model in the past; third, the “good” of the past is upheld in the present. The first two patterns are markedly divergent, while the last one is convergent.

For the “labeling” bias one often employs emotionally coloured, expressive and evaluative lexis, including spoken expressions and paretias. In the post of 27.01.2021 by US Secretary of State Anthony Blinken the Holocaust is rightfully labeled as evil with

negatively coloured emotive vocabulary (*murdered*, *anti-Semitism*, *hatred*). The evil of the past is juxtaposed by A. Blinken with America’s current effort to be a source of the “good” verbalized by the modified positively coloured paretia *a beacon for hope and good* (originally – *a beacon of hope*).

Today we honor the memory of 6 million Jews and millions of others murdered during the Holocaust. Honoring them means standing up against anti-Semitism and hatred. America will continue to be a beacon for hope and good in this world².

The “**association**” bias is mainly convergent in nature. It seeks to represent an individual as a part of the in-group (“I = We”) and build association with the same in-group of the past. The most frequent verbal means of association are those referring to the “collective past”: the metonymic “we” and “they”, precedent names and paretias.

In the following message of 11.11.2022 David Cameron, the former British Prime Minister, uses a line from the poem “For the Fallen” by L. Binyon³ to commemorate those who fell in the First World War. The line is to be treated as a paretia, frequently cited on Remembrance Day, in which the metonymic pronouns “we” and “they” are used to build intergenerational association. Another paretia used by D. Cameron is the famous “Lest We Forget”⁴ phrase in the form of a hashtag, also containing the metonymic “we”. Originally coined by R. Kipling in his poem titled “Recessional”, the phrase was popularized as an epitaph for Remembrance Day.

“At the going down of the sun and in the morning,

We will remember them.”

#LestWeForget #ArmisticeDay⁵

¹ Source: the digital files of the author of the given paper – E. M.

² Source: the digital files of the author of the given paper – E. M.

³ Binyon, R. L. For the Fallen. In: *Poetry*. URL: <https://www.poetry.com/poem/113783/for-the-fallen> (accessed: 28.10.2024).

⁴ Kipling, R. Recessional. In: *Poetry*. URL: <https://www.poetry.com/poem/33320/recessional> (accessed: 28.10.2024).

⁵ Source: the digital files of the author of the given paper – E. M.

The “**orientation**” bias sets the spatial coordinates of commemorative discourse. Orientation is often implemented through the simultaneous realization of convergence and divergence. On the one hand, the chosen place is a product of the present in that it is linked to the present-time context (most often because of being set up in the near past for the specific purpose of commemoration), but, on the other hand, it bears a vivid connection to the past, usually through precedent names with a symbolic meaning. Following the tendency towards reification and “sensorization”, the place is usually objectified and localizable.

For example, in the following post of 25.03.2021 by A. Blinken the spatial coordinates for commemoration of the 9/11 attacks are set with an adverbial modifier of place which consists of the proper name of the memorial and the official account tag of NATO (*the World Trade Center Memorial at @NATO*). The convergence of the past and the present is achieved through a combination of the symbolic precedent name of *the World Trade Center* and the abbreviation of NATO, which in the given context stands for the NATO Headquarters. It is through the tag that the localization of the memorial is specified, helping the reader to understand that the place in question is not the 2011 memorial in New York, but the 2017 one in Brussels. The coordinates help to understand from the first line which event is being commemorated. The understanding becomes possible due to the convergent process of addressing the reader’s sociocultural background.

*It is an honor to pay my respects today at the **World Trade Center Memorial at @NATO**. The day after 9/11, NATO Allies stood with us, invoking Article 5 for the first and only time in the Alliance’s history. We will #neverforget¹.*

The “**stability or change**” bias represents convergence and divergence respec-

tively, as implied by the name. The work of the bias is encapsulated in the following opposing paremias: “it has always been like this” and “things used to be better”. Stability and change are parts of the same perceptive framework closely related to overgeneralization [4] and the positive value of nostalgia and retro as parts of the cultural-cognitive code.

The “stability” bias can be illustrated with the post of 01.04.2019 by J. Trudeau devoted to the 20th anniversary of Nunavut, the largest Canadian territory. To communicate the feeling of stability J. Trudeau uses a number of words with the “continuity” seme in their meaning: *heritage, identity, continue*.

*Today we celebrate the 20th anniversary of Nunavut and the unique **heritage** of the people who call it home. The North is at the heart of our **identity** as Canadians, and we know that Nunavut **will continue** to play a key role in our country’s future. Happy Birthday, Nunavut!²*

In the following post of 07.08.2022 US President Joe Biden implicitly compares the non-localized “better past” with a “worse” current situation. The “used to” construction, the *to look somebody in the eye* paremia reinforced by the parallel constructions (*It was about ...*) as well as the repeated Past Indefinite verb form *was* serve to refer to the past. The personalization technique (speaking personally) seeks to reduce the social distance in order to evoke a feeling of collective nostalgia.

*My father **used to say** that a job **was** about a lot more than a paycheck. It **was** about your dignity, your respect, your place in the community.*

*It **was** about being able to **look your child in the eye** and say it **was** going to be okay.*

That’s the economy I’m determined to build³.

¹ Source: the digital files of the author of the given paper – E. M.

² Source: the digital files of the author of the given paper – E. M.

³ Source: the digital files of the author of the given paper – E. M.

Conclusions

As a result of the research, the cognitive illusion has been found to be the key mechanism of consolidation in commemorative discourse in that it facilitates creation and maintenance of the heterotopia of “collective memory” essential to constructing the in-group identity.

With the help of the cognitive-matrix analysis the “collective memory” can be modeled as a “core – periphery” matrix, where the core is the “otherness – sameness” conceptual opposition around which two main mirrored cognitive contexts of “Past/Future” and “Present” are centred. The boundary between them is permeable and can be transcended with the mechanism of the cognitive illusion, most often realized as “unity and continuity” in commemorative discourse. The cognitive contexts, in their turn, consist of a number of focal points, also mirrored: “I=We” – “They”, “Here” – “There”, and “Now” – “Then”. The cognitive illusion targets the cognitive contexts through a system of five biases (perspectives of interpretation) which derive from the general principles of human judgement and think-

ing, each reserved for a certain focal point. The “proximity” bias addresses the borderline between the two main contexts, the “labeling” bias works inside either of them, the “association” bias is reserved for the “I=We” – “They” contexts, the “orientation” bias works for the “Here” – “There” contexts, and the “stability or change” bias is valid for the “Now” – “Then” contexts.

The biases are realized in the commemorative discourse with the help of the strategies of convergence and divergence elaborated within the framework of Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT), both aiming inwards, at representing the social group as either similar to or different from its “other” self within the “collective memory” matrix. It is prominent that the precedent name and the paremia (ethnolinguocultural sententious set expression) play a key role in realizing convergence and, thus, communicating the feeling of consolidation in commemorative discourse.

A promising direction for further research, to our mind, could lie in elaboration of a general cognitive model applicable to any heterotopic discourse in institutional contexts.

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