

Exploring Notion of Language Crisis in Context of Global Multipolarity

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Abstract. The concepts of language crisis and communication crisis are analysed across publications in the areas of philosophy, mass communication, and linguistics within the timeframe of recent 5 years. Actual approaches to the interpretation of these notions, suggested by researchers in the Russian Federation and worldwide, are reviewed, and the ongoing processes that occur in languages and in communication in general are studied in their relation with the context of changing world order. Following the methodology of synergetics, the world order is represented as a non-linear dynamic system that is currently in search of its new equilibrium point and is approaching the state typically referred to as multipolarity.

1 Background

Multipolarity has begun being regarded as a property of the modern world within the geopolitical framework of the latest decade. The twentieth century was more or less characterized by bipolar status quo, with various states or blocs replacing each other in the positions of domination towards the rest of the world while generally maintaining the balance of power between two certain centres where financial, industrial, and creative forces would concentrate. In the last decade of the 20th century, following the deconstruction of the Soviet Union, the geopolitical system had shifted in the direction which tends to be attributed as monopolar, with the collective West typically perceived as the United States and their allies, occupying the position of the power capable of defining the features of the world's future. Certain opinion leaders and politicians have argued against this perception, referring to it as "illusion" if we consider examples [1], but it appears relatively safe to declare that common consensus agreed with the domineering role of the Western culture and civilization at the moment described.

However, in the light of the recent increase of importance and influence of the South Eastern Asia region, as well as of the ongoing rehabilitation of Russia as a political and economic subject, voices have been raised in support of the idea that articulates the formation of the multipolar world order, where the previously dominating force of the United States and their associates are regarded as the competitor for emerging power centres typically associated with China and the Russian Federation. A complex web of Eurasian-scale infrastructural projects, economic relationships, and cultural exchange is being established, aimed at reshaping the traditional geopolitical landscape and

incorporating traditional representatives of the collective West, such as the European Union or Australia, into the area of influence of the aforementioned emerging centres. It is natural that global changes, be they expected or factual, do not fail to attract the attention of miscellaneous researchers who attempt to describe the situation and predict its further development. It is also natural that importance of philosophical interpretation of this new geopolitical formation is being recognized.

Due to the fact that Russia is claiming to occupy one of the central positions in this newly nascent world order, it comes as no surprise that Russian thinkers and opinion leaders displayed considerable initiative in researching the matters under discussion. In the wake of Alexander Dugin's fundamental work [2], dedicated to analysing the actual situation through the scope of philosophical methodology, an amount of further research efforts has followed, from which a substantial paper by philosopher Valery Kashirin [3] could be singled out. This paper represents particular interest for us and our own scientific activities through its connection with synergetics, which is frequently regarded as the possible evolutionary form of philosophy and the new interdisciplinary science that can constitute the basics for the next scientific interpretation of the world, or *world picture*, commonly referred to as *post-non-classical science* in Russia, as well as with linguistics. We have been monitoring new insights into implementation of synergetic methodology in linguistic studies, and it has become our belief that further discussion of certain ideas mentioned in Valery Kashirin's paper could be rather productive in terms of both philosophy and language science.

The considerations we have been interested in can be summarized in the following way: Valery Kashirin suggests regarding the world order as a self-organizing

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system where the equilibrium point, otherwise referred to as attractor, is represented by the triangular construction of the multipolar geopolitical situation. The philosopher argues that any attempts to establish a monopolar or bipolar world order destabilizes the entire system and increases the amount of entropy in it, consequently moving it further away from the equilibrium and increasing the risk of its complete destruction. However, any self-organizing system is constantly being attracted to its equilibrium point; thus, the world order will constantly be attempting to return to its multipolar state, which is in a certain way natural for it, and due to this same reason, a monopolar or bipolar construction will not be able to survive in a long-term perspective. Also, in accord with this interpretation, the triangular system is characterized by fractal nature, so that its macrostructure is formed by repetition of similar microstructures, and the development of the system in general is guided by similar processes occurring on a lower scale within it. In addition, Valery Kashirin identifies the peculiar role of the language in the process of formation and development of the world's geopolitical system, representing it as the interactivity of *mass language* (i.e. language of the people) and *power language* (i.e. language of the government) that creates a higher-level macrostructure referred to as *language of the time*. In these concepts, we find certain correlations with our own research efforts. Our idea of development of new meanings in monosemantic words, acting as the driving force behind the movement of the language as a self-organizing system towards its equilibrium point where its entire vocabulary will be polysemantic, could be regarded as the lower-level fractal iteration of Valery Kashirin's idea of the language. This in general acts as the driving force behind the evolution of the world order towards its *super attractor* condition of *height of time*, understood as harmonious coexistence of all primary political and regional forces and unification of their efforts aimed at achieving flourishing and prosperity of the entire human kind.

Nevertheless, Valery Kashirin believes that the formation of the new multipolar world order is being performed under the circumstances of a language crisis, where neither mass language nor power language are able to perform their functions properly. This is the subject that we are determined to explore in this paper.

2 Methods and Materials

To achieve the objectives of this paper, the application of general scientific methods of comparison, analysis and synthesis was sufficient. It was our intention to explore various approaches to the interpretation of language crisis, that could be found in Russian and foreign researches. In accord with the timespan of the new multipolar world discourse, as well as with the general principle of selection of sources through the lens of their relevance for a subject that has made a recent appearance in scientific discussions, we have attempted to analyse all papers that mention the subject under review and that are available in open access either in the Russian

Federation or worldwide, within the limits of the latest 5 years. In order to discover the sources in the Russian language, the Russian Science Citation Index (National Electronic Library of the Russian Federation) was used; for sources in the English language, Google Scholar service was put to use.

We have made our choice in favour of less selective open access databases in connection with our belief that a relatively new area of scientific discourse might not yet have gained enough reputation and weight to be admitted to higher-ranking indices. A wider analysis scope would have enabled us to collect a greater amount of ideas, including those that might have been exceedingly daring for an established journal, but could have found their ways to a newer edition that can afford accepting non-mainstream papers.

However, prior to selecting certain publications and conducting our analytical and synthetical procedures, it was regarded by us as a necessary procedure to perform some speculations in relation with the term we were intending to use as the search criterion, i.e. *language crisis*. In Valery Kashirin's discourse, this term appears to have been coined intuitively; this can safely be explained by the fact that the researcher was concentrating on broader and more complicated topics, and the term under discussion, as well as ideas immediately related to it, was not in the focus of his attention. For us, it was of vital importance to have a clear and definite set of terminology, and following this reasoning, we have decided to look into the term itself before running actual searches.

3 Discussion

3.1 Terminology

It is more or less obvious that in this given case the notion of *language crisis* should be observed through the perspective of regarding a language as means of social evolution. Otherwise phrasing, as far as a language is considered as one of the primary agents that drive the social system towards its centre (or centres) of stability, the idea of *language crisis* appears to be rather evidently designed to describe the malfunction of a language, the situation where it becomes unable to perform its regulatory functions properly. We have previously approached this interpretation in the *Background* section. Nevertheless, when this term is contemplated more attentively, it becomes apparent that its content does not entirely coincide with the interpretation described.

If we choose this certain formulation (i.e. "language crisis"), then we inevitably expand the meaning of the notion under exploration through the implication that the inability of a language to achieve its objectives is conditioned by its inner malfunction. We would thus presuppose that the language itself has suffered an amount of damage or lost an amount of its resources; that would interfere with its operation in the society and prevent people from using it efficiently, ultimately leading to hindrance of movement along the

corresponding axis or trajectory of the evolution of the world order.

However, languages of the nations that are participating in the formation of the multipolar world do not generally appear to display signs that could be associated with fundamental destructive processes within their systems. Specialists do express minor concerns in connection with certain changes in said languages, such as increasing vocabularies of borrowed words or blurring of the borders of the literary variants as opposed to non-literary words and expressions, but these changes and these concerns have been accompanying languages for considerable amounts of time throughout their development and are neither new nor associated with the multipolar system by any means that we are aware of.

In our opinion, it will be a more plausible assumption to declare that both existing and potential decreases in efficiency of using languages to maintain the evolution of the global society stem from the reduction of people's linguistic competences rather than from the malfunction of the languages themselves. In other words, a language sustains its normal condition, but people lose (or are deprived of) their abilities to achieve their communicative objectives with it. For example, the government could make a perfect and competent application of the *power language* towards its subjects, but this application might be rendered entirely inefficient due to the inability or disinclination of these subjects to undergo the influence of this language.

Following these considerations, we find it more appropriate to speak about *communication crisis* rather than *language crisis*. Consequently, we used both terms in our selection of papers, with the assumption that the meaning associated with the notion under investigation could probably be expressed by any of them.

3.2 Definitions and approaches

We will now provide an overview of scientific articles and other publications that we have selected in accord with our search criteria and explore the approaches to interpretation of *language crisis*, as well as of *communication crisis*, in the modern context conditioned by ongoing changes in the global political landscape. We will briefly characterize the position of each author in relation with how they are suggesting to understand the notions mentioned above and offer remarks in cases of necessity.

A significant source that has to be mentioned prior to other ones is **Brian McNair's** *Communication and Political Crisis* [4]. This comprehensive study is generally addressing matters that are neighbouring our areas of interest but are not immediately overlapping with them; however, it contains several chapters that can be related with the notions we need to explore, and it is built upon methodological apparatus that appears to be similar to ideas which we have previously described.

In particular, this book is singled out by actual application of terminology associated with synergetics, as well as of corresponding approaches, to the study of politics, crises, communications and media. Brian

McNair underlines and stresses the significance and potential utility of using the notion of *chaos of communication*, leading to the resourceful interpretation of communication as of a non-linear process that cannot be governed by traditional means. The author argues that political and economic elites are increasingly losing control over the usual mechanisms they previously mastered, and among other symptoms of this process, the loss of control over media is mentioned.

Within this framework, development of new means of communication, as well as of wider and easier access to said means, could be imagined as a kind of the entropic process which destroys the existing state of the system and moves it towards a different condition. Brian McNair remarks that "elites lose their historic monopoly of control of the means of cultural production, which shifts to the masses" (p. 69). With this consideration in mind, we could potentially explain the malfunction of *mass language* and *power language* by their juxtaposition, where masses acquire access to means traditionally associated with language of the government (and consequently develop a more critical attitude to messages delivered through these means), while the government is more or less forced to resort to certain means of the 'language of the crowd' in order (or in an attempt) to ensure that it is heard.

For Brian McNair, a communication crisis happens mostly as a consequence of a political crisis, where the political or economic elites are not able to communicate their actions or decisions properly, or where the representation of certain events in the media aggravates the situation.

We also find it appropriate to mention **Mark Lloyd and Lewis A. Friedland's** *Communication Crisis in America, and How to Fix It*. In a review of the book, Christopher Ali [5] argues that *critical information needs* could be regarded as one of the central concepts of this research. In accord with it, various communities of the American people can be characterized by said needs, i.e. reception of accurate and 'robust' information, particularly news, on important subjects and topics becomes a matter of vital significance. Following this review, it appears that the collective authors of *Communication Crisis in America, and How to Fix It* believe that critical information needs should be satisfied through development and maintenance of a public policy that would determine tactics and strategies for communication in the democratic society.

It is also apparent that the researchers allocate a substantial spot in the suggested ecosystem of information management to local news as opposed to global messages; an interesting term such as *media desert* is introduced to denote locations that are deprived of local news for certain reasons. In this context, communication crisis is interpreted as a situation where the existing system of information delivery is overly concentrated around highly influential 'commercial media' and thus prevents the people from obtaining necessary news and from staying informed in the areas where their critical information needs reside.

From this point of view, the society is rather traditionally regarded as the receiver of information

rather than an active participant of the communication processes that occur between the government and the masses. With a 'public policy' as the key factor in *fixing* the communication crisis, communities would have to expect governmental actions aimed at regulation of the media market instead of contributing to changes in this area, or even challenging the elites' monopoly of access to global communication channels, as it is pictured in Brian McNair's book, for instance.

Overall, the notion of *communication crisis* is generally used in publications in the English language whenever their authors face the need to describe a public person's or an institution's failure to deliver information properly, that is to say, communicate it to the audience in a correct fashion. Within the limits of the recent 5 years, sources that would have offered a broader look at the communication crisis as malfunction of mechanisms that drive the development and evolution of the global social system were scarce. As far as the term *language crisis* is concerned, sources in the English language that we could discover were unanimously interpreting it as the situation of disappearance of minor languages conditioned by the expansion of major international languages. Due to the fact that this problem is not related to the area that we are determined to explore in this paper, we have made the decision to not mention these sources in our overview.

We will now proceed to the sources in the Russian language. These sources are scientific articles rather than books; due to this reason, they will receive shorter reviews. For simplicity, the titles of the papers will be given in English.

Chronologically, it is appropriate to commence the overview with **Natalia Danilevskaya's** *The Weakening of Dialogism as a Manifestation of Mass Communication's Crisis* [6]. This research paper technically belongs to the year 2012, but it was published on December 21st and could thus be regarded as being adjacent enough to the limits of the period that we have defined for our selection. The author analyses miscellaneous manifestations of what is referred to as 'weakening of dialogism' and represents them as an indicator of a crisis of Russian speech communication.

In this article, an external interpretation of speech communication crisis, suggested by Russian linguist Aleksei Chuvakin, is used. Natalia Danilevskaya agrees with this researcher in his regard on this notion, where it is represented as a combination of various inability of a certain person to perform speech-related activities. Thus, the idea of communication crisis is downscaled to the individual level, and larger manifestations of it are attributed to accumulation of multiple instances of individual actors' communicative failures.

Natalia Danilevskaya contributes to this interpretation by declaring that one of the primary mechanisms behind the communication crisis consists in neglect of the *other* participant of the communicative process, be they factual or assumed. The researcher believes that this 'weakening of dialogism' will inevitably result not only in misunderstanding but also in irritation and subsequent aggression of various sectors or members of a society against each other; however, she

underlines that her concerns are not to be regarded as attempts to foretell the death of the language as means of communication.

It is also relevant to mention **Dato Barbakadze's** *Hugo von Hofmannsthal's Language Crisis in the Context of Linguistic-Semiotic Ideas of Friedrich Nietzsche* [7] in this context. Despite the fact that this paper considers an isolated case rather than global tendencies, it remains connected with the area of study that we currently explore, through the notion of *language crisis*. The researcher suggests interpreting it in terms of literature science and regards it as the loss of a person's ability to speak and think about something in a logical fashion; such understanding is evidently rather similar to Aleksei Chuvakin's ideas that were presented above during the review of Natalia Danilevskaya's paper. Again, the notion of *language crisis* or *communication crisis* is regarded as a low-scale, elementary process. It must be remarked, however, that for the objectives that Dato Barbakadze pursued in their article, this interpretation is fully sufficient; the author explains that Hugo von Hofmannsthal had faced such crisis and had expressed the particular experience associated with it through the form of a letter written by a fictional character Lord Philip Chandos and addressed to Francis Bacon. It remains debatable whether this crisis should also be associated with a mental disorder.

An example of consideration of related topics in an indirect way is *Archaization of Language Discourses in the Period of Socio-Cultural Crisis* by **Maria Tyurina** [8]. In accord with the author's stance on the matter, during the periods of crises in societies and cultures, speech and communication undergo the process of their reduction to states and conditions that existed previously, on comparatively ancient stages of historical development. From the point of view of the synergetic approach, this situation comes as no surprise due to the fact that a destabilized system might be expected to deviate towards its nearest equilibrium state. However, a new situation of balance usually requires less energy to be achieved, and as a rule, the system stabilizes in a condition that is still different from its previous states. If we return to Maria Tyurina's ideas, then likewise, the archaic values and concepts only serve as temporary solutions that facilitate the transition of a culture to its new stage of development.

The author of the article under review proceeds with the explanation of changes in language that are associated with such return to previous cultural conditions and relevant layers of human mentality. 'Language of the revolution' is provided as an example of a new discourse that followed in the wake of Russian October Revolution in 1917. Maria Tyurina describes it as characterized by a peculiar split between two *power languages* stemming from archaization and modernization alike. The first discourse was, in the researcher's opinion, aimed at the masses (i.e. farmers and factory workers), while the second instance of *power language* was directed against the "enemies of the revolution" and bore traces of violence towards them.

Valeriy Yermakov's *Linguistic Communication and Language Games in Politics* [9] could be compared with

the previously reviewed paper due to the fact that the concept of *newspeak* is explored in it in connection with the establishment of the Soviet political regime in Russia. The author attracts the readers' attention to the statement that formation of a new society could not be imagined without creation of a 'new language' to satisfy its communicative needs.

It should also be mentioned that in Valeriy Yermakov's opinion, the *power language* defines the limits within which the language as the means of communication and propaganda is able to influence the political situation and the society in general. Within this framework, the researcher appears to interpret the notion of 'language games' as the attribute of messages that are intentionally constructed to be indefinite, dubious, or provoking. It might be declared that such propositions cannot serve as proper means of communication, as they are created without the normal intention to be properly and clearly understood; it remains a question, however, whether their appearance is a consequence or a reason of a communication crisis in politics.

In **Irina Nekipelova's** *Language Globalization: Inevitability or Necessity?* [10], it is declared that one of the consequences of language globalization would be an *anthropological language crisis*. Unfortunately, Irina Nekipelova does not offer a definition for this notion; it is more or less evident, however, that she links it with the increasing volumes of languages themselves and of information available to an individual nowadays, as well as with the inability of a human psychic to process these amounts of information before its resources would be exhausted. In other words, in the paper under analysis the notion of *language crisis* is associated with insufficiency of human conscience and thinking for the complex and voluminous task of dealing with large-scale information streams. It might thus be argued that the inability of individuals to use the *mass language* and to undergo the influence of the *power language* is partially related to slower development of the human psychic resources compared to the development of information technologies. In addition, important messages may be lost in the vast amounts of data that individuals and institutions are supposed to process.

We consider it important to emphasize Irina Nekipelova's idea of inevitability of violations of literary norms of a language. Following the methodology of synergetics, the researcher regards these violations as a natural constituent of the evolutionary process that frames the development of a language and appears to argue that they are necessary means of avoiding language stagnation. In a number of papers we reviewed, such violations are represented as signals that indicate the *language crisis* or the *communication crisis*, as well as the possible destruction of the language; however, they remain a driving force behind language evolution.

Another article that may be added to this overview is *Cultural Aspects of Changes in Language Environment: Communication Crisis or Excessive Communication?* by **Valeriya Kuznetsova** [11]. The author states that the technical progress achieved in the first decades of the 21st century has resulted in deconstruction of traditional ways of human communication, particularly through

involvement of the youth in social networking. In the researcher's opinion, this situation is manifested in contamination of a language by neologisms coined by miscellaneous users of the Internet, as well as in separation and artificial solitude of individuals who become addicted to these new ways of information transmission. It is then declared in the paper under review that the society is facing a paradox situation, where a significant number of persons is found in the circumstances of excessive amounts of communication (i.e. they allocate a considerable amount of their time and other resources to communicating via social networks and other similar channels due to being addicted to it), but simultaneously experience the *language crisis*. Valeriya Kuznetsova suggests regarding the development of speech culture as the possible solution of the problem. Basically, the notions of *communication crisis* and *language crisis* are to a certain extent synonymous in the article analysed: low-quality speech is spreading among individuals, and due to this reason, even though they communicate a lot, their communication is not efficient.

In **Anna Pryakhina and Nikolay Pryakhin's** *Moral and Value Crisis and Communication in Modern Informational Society* [12] attention is focused on the first part of the title rather than on its second constituent. Essentially, the authors are concentrating their research efforts on the analysis of moral and value crisis in the modern Russian environment. In accord with their reasoning, the traditional mechanisms that ensured proper transmission of values and other elements of human culture have suffered an amount of damage during the deconstruction of the Soviet Union and subsequent decline that was characteristic for Russia during the last decade of the 20th century. Consequently, as the researchers define it, the younger generations are lacking necessary reference points in terms of culture, while the older generations cannot efficiently transmit their values due to their incompatibility with the "new time". It should be remarked that the paper we are currently reviewing uses neither the notion of *language crisis* nor the notion of *communication crisis*. For the authors, communication is one of the possible ways to overcome the value crisis, where cultural institutions such as museums or libraries are being transformed into communication hubs that are able to deliver cultural reference points to the individuals that are not familiar with them.

We will complete this overview by mentioning **Temyr Hagurov and Andrey Ostapenko's** *From Crisis in Language to Chaos in Minds: Language Interventions as Causes of Moral Degradation of the Youth* [13]. This article may be related to a number of previously described papers. For example, it shares some of its concerns with Valeriy Yermakov's analysis of 'language games'. It is stressed by the authors that many aspects of human life where speech has traditionally been of major importance are being increasingly reduced to said games resulting in meaningless utterances rather than reasonable propositions, and the *language crisis* is similarly regarded as a matter of political significance rather than a cultural or aesthetic issue.

The researchers argue that during the recent decades the Russian language has undergone 5 different interventions of alien lexical units and, consequently, of alien concepts that are expressed by these units. Evidently, the transformation of the language, caused by these interventions, is seen as the *language crisis* in the paper under review, and this crisis is described as the influential force that conditions potentially destructive changes in young minds, which could later be used for various manipulations.

4 Results

In the recent 5 years, the notions of *language crisis* and *communication crisis* have not been actively explored. This could probably be explained by supposition that the researchers have not yet felt the necessity to redefine and / or reshape these terms in accord with changes which occur in the world order and in scientific or philosophical thought attempting to explain said changes. Even though a significant number of authors have been offering new insights into the nature of new media that have emerged in the wake of technological progress and active development of the Internet, as well as into the role that these new means of communication play in the modern world, the quantity of scientists and philosophers who are trying to generalize the current trends and advance to a more abstract level of their representation is still limited. The majority of researchers is concentrating their efforts on local matters, and it thus comes as no surprise that they regard both *language crisis* and *communication crisis* as phenomena of personal level, i.e. as peculiar mental conditions of isolated individuals who become unable to either use the language or to communicate properly with other members of their respective societies.

This interpretation should not be characterized as incorrect or invalid. Its justification is based on solid reasoning and common sense. In addition, phenomena of macro level are inevitably comprised of phenomena of micro level, and it can beyond doubt be stated that multiple cases of language or communication incompetence will result in a more generic inability to achieve specified objectives via the use of speech, be it oral or written, throughout the entire society. Nevertheless, it remains imperative that the notions of *language crisis* and *communication crisis* are studied on a more expansive scale and represented as global processes rather than individual cases.

Precisely speaking, books and research papers that would analyse *language crisis* or *communication crisis* within the context of global multipolarity have yet to emerge in considerable numbers. As we have mentioned in the previous parts of this paper, multipolarity has only recently obtained palpable features, and it is natural that science and philosophy have not yet fully embraced the importance of its description. We expect it to be studied in greater detail during the next decade, unless the world order retreats to one of its previous states.

Overall, even though human communications are undergoing obvious changes during the recent years, the impact of these changes is yet to be properly evaluated.

5 Conclusions

We find it possible to derive the following conclusions.

1. Assuming the fractal nature of the world order as a non-linear dynamic system where language is one of the trajectories or driving forces of its development, evolutionary processes that occur in the language may be regarded as homeomorphous to processes that occur in the world order.

2. The situation of decreased efficiency of individuals and institutions in the area of human communication and information management, both on a macro level and on a micro level, may be referred to as *language crisis* or *communication crisis*.

3. It may be advisable to associate the notion of *language crisis* with the inability to use the resources of a language in order to achieve desired objectives in communication, rather than with destructive processes within the language itself. In cases when said inability is conditioned by causes other than improper use of language resources, the notion of *communication crisis* may be applied.

4. Correct causal and consequential relationships need to be established between the shift of the world order towards its multipolar state, ability of individuals and institutions to achieve desired objectives in their communications, and efficiency of languages that individuals and institutions are using.

5. Certain scientific efforts are required to determine whether the changes in languages that occur on the current stage of their development are indeed indicating a *language crisis* or are a normal phenomenon that accompanies the evolution of languages.

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