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Method of meaning reconstruction and entrepreneurs' image

Problem setting.

The situation of *transitory economy* is characterized by the *uncertainty* – as a changeability and lack of predictability in tasks, conditions and work demands. Contemporary development of society in our country with *transitory economy* is characterized by the active formation of organizations that have various fields of activity, resource model and organizational culture, that are engaged in active entrepreneurial activity.

Entrepreneur in an uncertain environment must be ready to create the concept and to identify the environmental conditions as favorable. Founders must accept/reject the strategies suitable for the environment they interact with.

Entrepreneurs as a social group are being formed anew, past traditions of entrepreneurial activity are lost because it was punishable in Soviet period.

But the group of entrepreneurs is productive and effective, this is the most active part of the society which forms the concept, creates

companies, draws and transforms the resources, sets economic discourse of the society.

This leads to certain distortions in the perception of entrepreneurs as a group and of the discourse they create. And this is a problem because the attitude impedes the development of economy and leaves economically active and productive social group without support.

That is why the image of social group of entrepreneurs requires special analysis for its further changing and transformation and for social construction of the society.

Since the image can't be observed directly, it demands special approach to studying it.

Hacker [3] supposed that basic function in the process of regulation is fulfilled by the "systems of operative reflection" that are represented in memory and define individual way of productive activity. These systems include: anticipation of the result of work, knowledge of the conditions of work (for example, knowledge of the material properties and principles of machinery functioning), hypotheses about transformations (operations) that are needed to pass from the **factual, real condition/situation** to the desired one. In scientific literature there is a notion of the image of future action as a conception of something. Basically, systems of operative reflection fulfill cognitive function of expectation forming and so represent a searching model that defines actions.

The chain "comparison-change-feedback" explains the nature of work activity as an interaction of a man and situation (work environment). The environment generates certain objective tasks about which a man forms his own subjective opinion like specific systems of operative reflection. In the process of their implementation he influences the situation by changing it.

Hacker [2] identified three levels of regulation: sensorimotor, perceptual-conceptual and intellectual. Intellectual level precedes the other two. On this level a man develops general plan of task performing. On the perceptual-conceptual level he regulates individual actions. On the sensorimotor level he regulates the process of task performing.

From the point of view of the quality of activity, Hacker [2] considered intellectual penetration into the essence of the activity structure to be the most important change of mental structure.

Mental process of sensabilization, automatization, verbalization and intellectual processing govern the quality of activity. So, subjective representation in a form of specific systems of operative reflection (let's

label it “concepts or the image of future action”) serves as a predictor of the result of activity. From this point we can speak about the quality of a concept: its functionality and productivity, possibility to use it for describing, explaining and predicting changes and for transforming the reality.

The concept may have different level of formation. This is especially interesting on the stage of the unformed concept, new valuable concept, for example, on the stage of the concept of future activity. Concept (P.K.Vlasov) – is a “value-cognitive-performative pattern that initiates organizational activity. In general, organizational activity on the stage of a concept organizes four basic components: *needs* (demands of physical and mental well-being); *values* (what initiators considers to be good or profitable and starts to act in order to keep or to get it); *goals and intentions* (situational-specific form of values, certain object or the goal of action); and emotions (the form under which a man feels the changes of meaning of the resources) [6].

Taking into account all this, it is interesting to investigate the possibility to analyze the trajectory of concept life, to predict its reference in activity. So a question arises: how is it possible to investigate the concept of activity? [6]

Since communication (verbalization) is a way of forming and realizing the concept of activity (according to Hacker [3]), verbal reflection of the concept of activity is rather representative for the description, for studying the concept of activity and for predicting the activity itself.

Hacker supposed that the system of operative reflection “works” in the interaction of a man and situation (work environment) in a chain “comparison-change-feedback”.

Subject’s verbal reaction to the object reflects verbal image of this object. To be specific, the system of knowledge (morphology), attitude towards an object (axiology) and instrumental relation/action (praxiology) of an object [4]. Such verbal reaction is a partial or full description of the object. In fact, description that a man builds is anthropocentric, that is it bears a trace of a man’s subjective attitude towards object.

As a rule, verbal reactions (texts) are not considered from such point of view. For example, in linguistics text/meaning of a text is linear, that is logically derived from the meaning of linguistic units of a text. In sociology, the meaning of the objects is generally viewed as most frequent reactions of a group of respondents towards an object, it is also linear (only from the respondent’s position). We propose to view verbal reaction towards object

as a total product of a man's culture that includes his values, knowledge, actions/instruments. Such reaction reflects subject's concept in relation to the object. Through his verbal reaction a man interprets the object, so to say "embeds" it into his own subjective context. A man creates his own individual discourse of the objects in which his individual construction of social world is reflected. Through his verbal reaction a man constructs social world that includes this object as well.

From the point of view of system approach, verbal reaction is an element of interaction between a man and an object, and the meaning of such verbal reaction is system effect that consists simultaneously of object's and subject's characteristics. So on the basis of verbal reaction we can study both the object for a certain group of subjects and to make inferences about the group itself (its system of values, attitudes, knowledge, actions).

So in order to analyze verbal reflection of the concept of activity we need an isomorphic structure of activity, on the one hand, and a man, on the other. This structure should reflect the dynamics of these relations and allow to predict activity.

As a basis of such structure we adopted hierarchical model of activity description developed by G. Sukhodolsky. It includes:

- elements and structures that define *morphology* of activity;
- needs, values that fulfill them and estimates that reflect them define *axiology* of activity;
- development and functioning define *praxiology* of activity;
- existence, characteristics and cognition express *ontological* aspect of the world [4].

Research method

We propose an approach and method of meaning reconstruction. By decomposing subject's verbal reaction, breaking it into elements, we propose to consistently identify all subjective elements, "imprinted" in respondent's verbal reaction, to reconstruct the meaning of object and so to reconstruct subjective concept, construction of the subjective social world with the help of which a man attributes meaning to the object.

The structure of the approach is as following.

Morphology of activity is a content of activity, its correlation with concrete activity and with objects included in it. These objects are included into verbal description, chosen by a man for oriented activity. Linguistic equivalent of morphology of activity are the concepts included into description, their quantity. Semantics of concepts points to the content of activity and its orientation. The quantity of concepts tells about cognitive complexity and the level of differentiation and so – about man's awareness

of concepts, its availability and controllability of activity.

To reconstruct the whole concept of activity we can't use one single method, since we didn't manage to find such method in literature. So we decided that a complex of methods is needed that will allow to reconstruct the concept of activity.

Linguistic equivalent of *axiology* and values that take part in activity is the weight (frequency) of concepts and their emotional evaluation, that is emphases in morphology. Frequency and evaluative structure forms hierarchical structure of the concept of activity and tells about man's priorities and attitude towards activity.

Praxiology of activity description is formed by explanatory pattern disclosing what lies behind a given description (the reason for choosing these very elements in this very hierarchical and evaluative structure). It uncovers man's motives that trigger the concept. Explicit and implicit logical-semantic webs of connections included into description can serve as a linguistic equivalent of praxiology. They uncover intentional nature of utterances. Praxiology uncovers basic driving motive, development and functioning of man's activity.

Key concepts that form the description and their hierarchy serve as parametric criteria of comparison and allow to compare different concepts or the concepts of different people and to study them. This forms *gnoseological level of activity description*.

The context in which there arises a possibility for the appearance and existence of such concept of activity expresses *ontological level of activity description*. This level doesn't have direct linguistic equivalents, that is those that have no explicit reflection in the text of description. It is reflected in basic presuppositions that allow the very context of activity description to exist. It may be expressed in archetypes, ethnical stereotypes that explain the origin and existence of a concept.

Methodically, it looks like a sequence of the stages of meaning reconstruction.

- *The selection of meaningful reactions.* Formal reactions need to be separated from *meaningful* ones in order for the data to be consistent and informative. Formal reactions are not informative, they express stereotypical emotional attitude. Judgments and wishes can also be included here.

- *Reconstruction of the morphology of an object.* It includes thematic classification of verbal reactions with the help of the method of thematic-rhematic segmentation of a sentence [3]. In each utterance we have isolated

a theme (what the sentence is about) and a rheme (what is specifically told about this psychological subject). The use of this method was based on the structuralist tradition of differential organization of signs [5, pp. 253-291]. The rhemes of utterance are contrasted with the themes on the basis of syntactical construction of a sentence. The themes in a normal structure of a sentence usually take place of the subject, the rhemes take place of predicate. With the change of “normal” structure of a sentence, a certain object becomes especially noticeable, that is it takes place of a rheme. The result of this stage is thematic, that is morphological, structure of an object.

- *Axiological structure of an object.*
 - includes *classification* of verbal reactions in relation to their modality within thematic groups into positive, negative and neutral utterances.
 - Includes frequency classification of semantically connected rhemes. Semantically close rhemes unite into classes and their frequency is defined. The most frequent rhemes and those with positive estimate reflect the value of the elements of morphology of objects. The result of this stage is reconstruction of the axiological structure of an object.
- *Reconstruction of praxiology.*
 - *Positive and negative image.* All identified elements of the morphology of an object with positive and negative axiology (the most frequent rhemes with positive or negative estimation) allow to reconstruct an integral image of an object. On this stage we used the method of narrative semiotics (structural semantics (Greimas, Propp, Pearce [5, p. 173])). It supposes identification of the surface and deep structure of the level of syntax. Surface structure is immediately recognized and easily accessed from text. Deep structure is a fundamental system of values embedded into a text (consists of norms and values). Narrative structure is defined by basic roles (actants) and the relationships and their movement towards one another. The result of this stage is a narrative pattern or an integral image of an object showing elements of morphology, their axiology and relations between them.
 - *Reconstruction of intentions.* It includes reconstruction of social intentions that “trigger” the resultant image. Verbal reaction reflect performative component as well – intentions of a group of respondents. On this stage we used methods of functional

pragmatics (K.Buhler, C.Morris and Karnap), based on the theory of action (J.Austin). Basic instrument on this stage is a *linguistic pattern that reconstructs the purpose for which an actor undertakes the action*. To reconstruct an intention, we used the following question: "Which needs are met and what are the expectations of a group during the interaction with this object?" Positive image reflects satisfied expectations/intentions, and negative one reflects frustrated expectations/intentions.

- *Reconstruction of gnoseology.*

Semantic scales and thesaurus of object description. It includes contrasting of negative, positive and neutral images. They contain shared elements of morphology. They are "prevailing" that is they form basic scales of object description. On the basis of such notions, we can restore the whole scale if we propose their antonyms. As a result, we got the scales by which the group of respondents "measures" an object by showing certain attitude towards it. The resultant generalized scales, reconstructed intentions and synthesized image can be considered to be the end of a procedure.

Participants of the research

We want to illustrate this using the example of empirical research of the meaning of image of social group of entrepreneurs that was conducted using the method of random sampling (5000 respondents during the period 1995-1998, in Ukraine). The research has pointed to the explicit multidimensional nature of the meaning of category "Entrepreneur" [7]. Basic social, gender and age groups are proportionally represented in a sample.

Purpose of the research

We wanted to define the thesaurus of notions that describe attitudes towards social group of entrepreneurs. We also wanted to synthesize the notions included into description into general image, that is to define relations between them and the modality of image.

Objective difficulty of research lies in the fact that an image doesn't have direct expression and is hidden from the direct observation. In order to research it, it should be explicated.

Besides, new social groups and institutions are still on a stage of formation, so an attitude towards them and their image are not yet fully formed and don't have a representation clearly expressed and embedded in social environment. These limitations should be taken into account when planning and conducting experiment.

The conception of research was based on the following: attitude towards social-economic space is formed on the basis of the *image* of the world and is a synthesis of one's own already existing knowledge about the world and changes in environment. We have taken into account a subject's tendency to perceive an object as a whole and have called it image *integrity*. Image has verbal expression, exists in a form of utterances, judgments and has conceptual saturation. The measure of notions' variety that describe image was called image *differentiation*.

The notions in image are in a certain connection with each other (cause-effect, sort-kind, part-whole, attribution). This was called image *coherence*. The image of social group much or less fits the reality, that is it possesses *adequacy, reality*. Image has emotional-evaluative component, that is *modality*: positive, negative and neutral. In such case positive, negative or neutral attitude towards social groups is demonstrated.

To gather data, we used method of unfinished sentences since it allows the participants to freely express their judgments not taking into account that social group of Entrepreneurs was new and unknown phenomenon for them. To process judgments we used method of meaning reconstruction that was introduced above.

For our survey we used method of interviewing respondents. They were asked to finish the sentence: "*What can you tell about...?*" The answers were fixed word for word.

Results and discussion

The resultant judgments were analyzed in relation to the criterion of reality. We found out that the majority of judgments (73%) were not connected with company's real behavior in the market. This is shown in the following statements: "*I don't know what it does, but I know that it cheats on trusting people*", "*This is simply a siphoning of money*", "*Firms open up to become rich at the expense of people, they don't hope to work forever, that is why they exist due to the deception*", "*Normal laws are needed in order for normal companies to exist*". On the one hand, it points to the lack of awareness of the respondents. On the other hand, it points to their activity in forming judgments. The existence of judgments in situation of absence of information points to the fact they are stereotypical and unreal. So the image of entrepreneurs is also unreal and expresses stereotypical attitude towards this social group. Since this image is unreal, the notions included in it can also be unrepresentative for the description of this social group.

We have also analyzed modality of judgments and found out that:

25% of judgments have positive modality. For example, "*I think the*

company is rich, if it will issue stocks, they can be bought”, “I think the company has money, so they work effectively”, “The main thing is to work for people, if it works for them, then it is good”.

60% of judgments have negative modality. For example: *“They can go bankrupt any moment”, “Charlatans who lie and steal”, “Like all companies, try to make money out of air”.*

9% of judgments have neutral modality. For example: *“I am tolerant towards any form of activity”, “I don’t mind at all, let it flourish, but without me”, “I didn’t interact with them, my attitude is calm”.*

6% of judgments – respondents didn’t express any attitude referring to the lack of information. That is stereotypical judgments fix negative attitude of social environment towards this social group.

After that we have chosen the most frequent judgments and obtained positive and negative linguistic attribution of social group of “Entrepreneurs”. We have identified the thesaurus that describes image of this social group and have decided that the notions that are included in stereotypes are located depending on modality of the poles of the following scales:

Table 1.
Scales of notions that form stereotypical image of “Entrepreneurs”

Absence of purpose	Presence of purpose
Simplicity	Complexity
Orientation towards a circle	Orientation towards a social community
Instability	Stability
Lack of power	Financial power
Dishonesty	Honesty
Unavailability	Availability
Absence of scope	Scope
Closed up	Openness
Insincerity	Sincerity
Inability to make business	Ability to make business
Short life	Longevity

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Abstracts

PETRO WŁASOW, GANNA KYSELOWA. **Metoda rekonstrukcji istoty i wizerunku przedsiębiorców.** W artykule przedstawiono wyniki badań empirycznych przeprowadzonych za pomocą metody rekonstrukcji istoty w celu przeanalizowania stosunku społeczeństwa wobec grupy społecznej przedsiębiorców oraz określenia modalności tego obrazu. Wykazano, że większość opinii wyrażanych nie odpowiadają rzeczywistości, odzwierciedlają stereotypowe postawy społeczeństwa wobec tej grupy społecznej. Większość opinii przedstawia negatywny wizerunek przedsiębiorcy, który w odróżnieniu od pozytywnego, oparty jest na logicznie uwarunkowanym rozumowaniu oraz w aspekcie pojęciowym jest bardzo zróżnicowanym. Pokazano, że konsekwentne uporządkowanie i klasyfikacja reakcji werbalnych pozwalają zrekonstruować obraz werbalny i istotę wizerunku przedsiębiorców.

Słowa kluczowe: metoda rekonstrukcji, znaczenie, istota, wizerunek, przedsiębiorstwo, przedsiębiorca.

ПЕТРО ВЛАСОВ, ГАННА КИСЕЛОВА. **Метод реконструкції смислів та іміджів підприємців.** У статті розглядається вербальна реакція на об'єкт як сукупний продукт людської культури, що включає його цінності, знання, дії/інструменти. У процесі емпіричного дослідження, використовуючи метод реконструкції смислу, було досягнуто ціль проаналізувати відношення у суспільстві до соціальної групи підприємців та визначити модальність цього образу. Для вирішення задач дослідження було використано метод незакінчених речень і метод тема-рематичного членування речення. Було показано, що більшість суджень, що були висловлені, не відповідають реальності, що вказує на стереотипне відношення суспільства до цієї соціальної групи. У більшості суджень є представленим негативний образ підприємця, який, на відміну від позитивного, базується на логічно обґрунтованих висновках і у понятійному плані є особливо диферційованим. Більш за те, було показано, що негативний образ значно більше, ніж позитивний, базується на ціннісних переконаннях. Було однозначно показано, що послідовне упорядкування і класифікація вербальних реакцій дозволяють реконструювати вербальний образ і смисл об'єкта для суб'єкта.

Ключові слова: метод реконструкції, смисл, значення, імідж, підприємництво, підприємець.

ПЕТР ВЛАСОВ, АННА КИСЕЛЕВА. **Метод реконструкции смыслов и имиджей предпринимателей.** В статье рассматрива-

ется вербальная реакция на объект как совокупный продукт культуры человека, включающей его ценности, знания, действия/инструменты. В ходе эмпирического исследования, используя метод реконструкции смысла, была реализована цель проанализировать отношение в обществе к социальной группе предпринимателей, и определить модальность этого образа. Для решения задач исследования были применены метод неоконченных предложений и метод тема-рематического членения предложения. Показано, что большая часть высказанных суждений не соответствует реальности, что свидетельствует о стереотипном отношении общества к этой социальной группе. В большей части суждений представлен отрицательный образ предпринимателя, который, в отличие от положительного, основан на логически обоснованных умозаключениях и в понятийном плане оказывается особо дифференцирован. Более того, продемонстрировано, что отрицательный образ значительно в большей степени основан на ценностных убеждениях, чем положительный. Однозначно показано, что последовательное упорядочивание и классификация вербальных реакций позволяют реконструировать вербальный образ и смысл объекта для субъекта.

Ключевые слова: метод реконструкции, значение, смысл, имидж, предпринимательство, предприниматель.

PETRO VLASOV, ANNA KISELEVA. **Method of meaning reconstruction and entrepreneurs' image.** *The article deals with verbal reaction to the object as the combined product of human culture, including its values, knowledge, action / tools. In the empirical study, using the reconstruction of the meaning of the method has been implemented aim to analyze the attitude of society to the social group of entrepreneurs, and to determine the modalities of this image. To solve the problems of research were applied method of incomplete sentences and thematic division of the sentence method. It has been shown that most of the opinions expressed do not correspond to reality, reflecting the stereotypical attitude of the society towards this social group. In most of the judgments presented a negative image of the entrepreneur, who in otlichie from positive, based on a logically sound reasoning and is particularly differentiated in the conceptual plan. Moreover, it demonstrated that a negative image is significantly more based on the belief values than positive. Clearly it shows that the sequential ordering and classification of verbal reactions allow to reconstruct a verbal image of the object and meaning for the subject.*

Key words: reconstruction method, value, meaning, image, business, businessman.