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# Actual and Non-Actual World in the French Text

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“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” The Russian version of this dictum states the Word as a primordial essence. In the Russian speech reality it is often used as an incentive to listen to the Word, to its self-value. The plurality of senses standing behind the term “Word” prompts one to turn to foreign languages, and a different perspective appears: *Au commencement “le Verbe etait et le Verbe etait avec Dieu et le Verbe etait Dieu”*... *Le Verbe* states reality and fame of its pre-existence, *Dieu* is used predicatively as a supreme value, that is non-essentially. The same holds in English. I shall take the liberty to give my own interpretation of the Word - “*le Verbe*” with the language reality adding to it. V. Humboldt said: “In order man could grasp at least a single word..., the whole language in all its interconnections has to be included into it.” We consider language as man’s environment “outside of which and without the participation of which nothing can happen in our life” (Gasparov 1996, p.5). The relationships which man establishes with the world, with himself, with other men are reflected in the language texture and in culture and they are passed from generation to generation. As soon as man gets into the world, he turns out to be plunged into his environment.

In this paper we deal with the process of the world’s reflection and perception of the verb tenses of the indicative mood in the French language. There are fifteen tenses. In their usage they are not confused, and do not substitute for each other either in their form or in content. People cannot say that a single tense is unnecessary or they can do without it

The tradition of French grammar is rich in descriptions of the system of tenses and their systematization. They are the core of grammar, from the banal division into simple and complex to the table of the sequence of tenses. All of them have the right to exist but they do not clear up why such variety is necessary.

Russians, who study French as a second language, act simply in the majority of cases: they just choose three of fifteen tenses (present, imparfait - which is as simple as in Russian, futur proche corresponding to the complex form of the future in Russian or futur simple - the simple form of the future). The rest tenses are not taken into account. Very often it happens because the teacher, a native speaker of Russian, does not stimulate the student to use *passee simple* as the bookish tense or claims that other tenses, apart from the above-mentioned, express some temporal nuances, without which speakers can easily do.

Native speakers of French do not care about the quantity they use, how they are formed or how they are called. A French colleague of mine, a psychologist by profession, got interested in the tense system of Russian and being told that there are three tenses in Russian - present, past, and future, exclaimed: “Just like in French!”

Looking for an answer to the question about the variety of meanings and forms, I came to an idea that the clue is the individual. It is essential to tell the speech addressee about him or herself. My research and my own second language (French) speech practice

helped me clear up the main parameter for the primary differentiation - a moment of speech.

Either the presence or absence of a moment of speech in the temporal meaning distinguishes two temporal plans, that correspond in perception and expression to two worlds - real (actual), where there is a moment of speech, that is, a speaker, and non-actual, where there is an indication to a certain point of departure and the absence of the speech moment.

The past tense plan attaches the story a mythological and epic coloring while the present tense plan ascertains that the events belong to the real world, events seem anal and they are not realized as epoch-making, bearing a special value. But the person is inclined to attach importance to what has taken place to realize the value of the past. In the French language this idea is reflected in the system of tenses, it reveals itself in the text where a human being appears.

In French speech, two basic types of texts are singled out: text-narration (recit) and text-discourse (discours). The text-narration is the third person narration, having no syntactic repetitions, characterized by the contraction of syntactic groups and by the use of the tenses of the past plan (imparfait, passe simple, plusque-parfait, passe anterieur, passe immediat dans le passe, futur dans le passe, futur immediat dans le passe, futur interieur dans le passe) and others. In the narrative text the narration is conducted by some outside narrator, the tense passe simple serves to convey the plan of the event, tenses imparfait and plus-que-parfait serve to create descriptive background.

Text-discourses more often use the first and second person forms, the syntax of the colloquial speech with its peculiarities such as elliptical sentences, repetitions and present tenses (present, passe compose, passe recent, passe surcompose, futur proche, futur simple, futur anterieur).

In the differentiation of the two temporal plans, reflecting two worlds—actual and non-actual – one can trace ideas of phenomenological and cultural character: to provide the speech addressee with exact support in the content perception, to address the message, to let the addressee know what is meant, what is going on “here and now,” how it is connected with the prior and the following, or to declare that it is not here and not now. The idea is to make the speech addressee closer, to let him or her interfere, ask questions, or express his or her opinion. Or, vise versa, to move him or her away.

In the Russian language, the actual and non-actual worlds are connected. They can be separated only by the inner work of the perceiving subject, which can be illustrated by the final scene of the film *Peculiarities of Russian National Hunting* and a phrase said by the hero, Finn Raivo. The pictures of today’s hunting are alternated with the picture of hunting, which had shaped in Raivo’s mind after reading nineteenth century Russian literature, Leo Tolstoy, in particular. Raivo says in Russian: “Khoroshaya okhota byla!” To translate this into Russian, it is necessary to separate the worlds. In the actual world, in the world of the real events it will sound like “On s’est bien amuse a la chasse!” If this idea refers to the hunting of Leo Tolstoy’s epoch, it will be translated “On s’amusait bien a la chasse!”<sup>1</sup>

It is characteristic of the space of French culture to separate actual and non-actual worlds. This feature is explained by the necessity in the act of communication to keep in view the speech addressee, that is the Other, to confirm his or her psychological presence.

This feature manifests itself not only in the system of verb tenses, but in the article's existence and functioning, in the concord of the prepositional direct object with the participle in the complex tense forms with the auxiliary verb *avoir*, in the formulas of speech behavior, in the syntactically full forms of the phrase and text, and in the unity of the syntactic subject in the text.

### Works Cited

1. Gasparov, B.M. *The Linguistics of Language Existence*. M. Novoye literaturnoye obozreniye, 1996.