



Valentyna **Ushchyna**, uval[at]ukr.net
Lesya Ukrainka Eastern European National University, Lutsk, Ukraine

Situated conceptualization of risk: Towards a socio-cognitive semiotics of stancetaking in risk discourse situation

This study concerns the socio-cognitive dynamics of interactive processes of stancetaking in the discourse situations of risk. Discursive construction of stances in the risk discourse situation involves personal risk perception and conceptualization as well as interpersonal communication of risks. Therefore, stancetaking on risk is seen here as an intricate and dynamic phenomenon that links both individually cognitive and commonly shared social processes of sense-making.

Language, as a prime means to stimulate and manage the building of situated conceptualizations for understanding different cultural and social environments, serves the main source through which “people are categorizing their experience of the world” (Taylor 2003, p. xii). Linguistic cues work as the most important reference points for meaning construction. They transform cognitive processing from an individually to a socially-distributed activity, and thus, motivate researchers to promote the ecological view of discourse production as a socio-semiotic practice.

The objective of this study is to find out what linguistic means and cognitive mechanisms are used by the speech participants to conceptualize the discourse situation as a situation of risk and analyze the ways the stances on one and the same problem (e.g., the risk of war, the risk of economic problems or the risk of political crisis) are taken by different discourse participants under different communicative conditions.

The theoretical framework for the study synthesizes sociocognitive approaches to discourse analysis (van Dijk 2008; Keszkes 2012, Wodak 2006), which form an interface of mind, discourse interaction and society. In other words, the use of socio-cognitive approach allows looking into the ways in which individual cognitive processes are related to the structures of discourse, verbal interaction, communicative events and social semiotics of situated discourse. FrameNet, based on a theory of meaning called Frame Semantics, deriving from the work of Fillmore *et al.* (2003), offered its version of the RISK situation model. This model served as a conceptual foundation for the analysis of stance, framed by the situational context of RISK.

Risks are seen as both real and constructed: risk thinking is a way of intending to control one’s life and the world in general. We often make necessary choices in different situations of life applying mental models and common sense knowledge, which guide our decision-making. “Risk society” (Beck 1996) becomes a discursive stage where risk thinking produces even more real risks. People become the risk subjects facing a necessity of risky decisions on a regular basis.