Language, culture and society: Modality, face and societal logic

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Abstract: It is common to distinguish between individualistic cultures typically associated with Western countries and collectivistic cultures normally linked to Asian countries. Some countries are not easily characterized, because they are placed right in the middle of the continuum. This concerns, for instance, Russia. In this paper, I will attempt to demonstrate on the basis of the theory of communicative supertypes that the notion of individualism is intimately connected to the notion of alethic modality – concerned with laws of nature, i.e. what is possible, impossible, necessary and unnecessary – whereas the notion of collectivism is tied up with the notion of deontic modality having to do with laws of society, i.e. permission, prohibition, obligation and non-obligation. Specifically, the British-English speaking speech community is based on the alethic notion of possibility and guided by the hearer's face, i.e. second person, in contrast to the Mandarin-Chinese-speaking community which is based on the deontic notion of obligation and guided by the speaker's face, i.e. first person. Compared to this, the Russian-speaking community stands out as a third unnoticed variant that seems to differentiate nature and society by making a sharp distinction within their aspectually defined modality system, between alethic and deontic logic expressed by the perfective and the imperfective aspect, respectively. That Russian culture must be a third variant is confirmed by their understanding of face as being defined in relation to the situation itself, i.e. third person.

1. Introducing Chinese, Russian, and English

1.1. Preliminary remarks

It is a common belief that human beings communicate directly about external reality, but, in fact, the speaker and the hearer communicate with one another using the same communication channel without even touching external reality. There are, however, three communication channels (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: Communicative supertypes as different communication channels

CHANNEL ONE: SPEAKER-ORIENTED LANGUAGES (LIKE CHINESE)
CHINESE SPEAKERS SPEAK ABOUT REALTY THROUGH THE SPEAKER'S EXPERIENCE OF IT
CHANNEL TWO: REALITY-ORIENTED LANGUAGES (LIKE RUSSIAN)
RUSSIAN SPEAKERS SPEAK ABOUT REALITY THROUGH THE SPEAKER'S AND THE HEARER'S SHARED UNDERSTANDING OF IT
CHANNEL THREE: HEARER-ORIENTED LANGUAGES (LIKE BRITISH ENGLISH)
ENGLISH SPEAKERS SPEAK ABOUT REALITY THROUGH THE HEARER'S MEMORY OF IT

The three communication channels reflect the fact that reality exists in three different modalities in the human mind (cf. Durst-Andersen 2011, 2012), because human beings process visual stimuli from situations in external reality in three steps which leave three different products (see Figure 2).

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Figure 2: Reality's existence in three modalities in the human mind

STEPS	MODALITY	TYPE OF MEMORY	PRODUCT
FIRST STEP	EXPERIENCE	SENSORY MEMORY	INPUT
SECOND STEP	UNDERSTANDING	WORKING MEMORY	INTAKE
THIRD STEP	MEMORY	LONG-TERM MEMORY	OUTCOME

In the human mind, external reality exists as: (1) your experience of a situation – called input – corresponding to sensory memory; (2) your understanding of the experience of that situation – called intake – corresponding to working memory; and (3) your memory of the understanding of the experience of that situation – called outcome – corresponding to long-term memory. When members of a speech community want to communicate with one another, they must choose a common voice among the three different ways in which reality exists in the human mind. The members of the three different speech communities seem to have agreed to use different communication channels (cf. Figure 1).

A language shows its channel to its users by having specific categories that all point in the same semiotic direction: i.e. towards the speaker (channel one), towards situations in reality (channel two) and towards the hearer (channel three).

1.2. Chinese as a language oriented towards first person

The Chinese interest in direct experience appears from the fact that Chinese has serial-verb constructions. This means that it uses several verbs for one verb in English: *I went to France on vacation* would be "I sit down aeroplane fly France travel around", because this is what the speaker experiences when doing it. Chinese also has classifiers to show how the object named by the noun is experienced by the speaker, e.g. *zhāng* (used for flat things such as pictures), *běn* (used for objects with many pages such as books), etc. There are 85 of them. The focus on direct experience must be the reason why Chinese lacks a character/word for the subordinating conjunction *that*, of English, as well as for relative pronouns such as ~~Eng.~~ *which* and *who*. They cannot be experienced. Chinese does not have tense or mood because, for the Chinese speaker, every experience is present here and now. Everything is online. However, Chinese has at its disposal a set of sentence-final particles (*a* 'immediate impression', *ya* 'wondering', *ba* 'recommendation', *ma* 'question', *le* 'experience' and *ne* 'information') that occur at the end of a sentence to show the exact place from where it is verbalized in the speaker's universe of discourse. From a semiotic point of view, the Chinese utterance is a *symptom* of the speaker's experience of a situation. This means that the semiotic direction of Chinese utterances is first-person oriented.

1.3. Russian as a language oriented towards third person

The Russian interest in situations of reality appears from the fact that Russian is an aspectual language in which verbs are represented by two verbal forms in all finite and all infinite forms – e.g. 'give sth. to sb.' is both *davat'* (imperfective aspect) and *dat'* (perfective aspect). The imperfective form (ipf) and the perfective form (pf) name the same action but present it, respectively, as an ongoing process – i.e. an activity intended to cause a change of state – and as an event, i.e. as a state caused by an activity. It is impossible to find an action, as such, in external reality; it is only possible to find its manifestations, i.e. events and processes. Moreover, Russian has a specific mood system that distinguishes the real word (the indicative mood) from the imagined world (the subjunctive mood) and a very elaborate case system, where the nominative and the accusative cases show that the entity

named by the noun is present in the situation referred to (*Mama* (nom.) *doma* 'Mummy is home'), while the genitive case shows that the entity named by the noun is not present in the situation referred to (*Mamy* (gen.) *doma* net 'Mummy is not home'). Furthermore, Russian has a range of different syntactic constructions with and without a subject, to be able to name the many varieties of the same prototypical situation. From a semiotic point of view, the Russian utterance is a *model* of the situation referred to in external reality, i.e. any Russian utterance will always point to a specific situation, be it in the real world or in an imagined world. The conclusion is that the Russian utterance is third-person oriented.

1.4. British English as a language oriented towards second person

The British interest in the hearer appears from the fact that British English has grammatical categories which denote old and new information. This concerns the crucial distinction within the verbal tense system between the simple past (*bought* – old information) and the present perfect (*has bought* – new information), the corresponding distinction within the nominal system between the indefinite article (*a car* – new information) and the definite article (*the car* – old information), and the equivalent distinction within the syntactic system between *there*-sentences (new information) and *it*-sentences (old information). New and old information is, however, not only a matter of grammar – it is a way of thinking that is present in any utterance and therefore in any kind of communication. For instance, one will often find *I met the director of the hospital the other day… The hospital's director told me that …* Thus, the distinction between *of*- and *'s*-genitive is also a matter of new and old information. From a semiotic point of view, the English utterance points to the hearer and is a *signal* to the hearer. This means that the English utterance is second-person oriented.

In the following, we shall examine the pragmatic consequences of always pointing to either first person, third person or second person.

2. Problem solving – the use of directive utterances

2.1. Introductory remarks

Inspired by Leech (1983: 35), the use of directives will be linked to problem solving. When the speaker has a problem that can be solved by the hearer, the directive is called a request, e.g. *Could you pass me the salt, please?*; when the hearer has a problem that can be solved by the speaker, the directive is named an offer, e.g. *Why don't you sit down?* A problem involves a clash between the actual state and the state desired by the speaker alone or via the hearer. The actual state is experienced by the speaker as a defective state, i.e. a state that is opposite to the desired state. This imbalance is eliminated if the request or the offer is carried out. The result will be re-established consensus between the speaker and the hearer, which feeds into the equilibrium of society (cf. Finlayson 2003: 143-144; Habermas 1998). In short, directive speech acts play a crucial role, not only among individual members of a speech community but also for society as a whole. That is why the specific use of directives in a specific speech community may be revealing from the point of view of both culture and society.

In the following, I will refer to the so-called GEBCom project which, among other things, consists of a production test in English made by 25 native speakers, 25 speakers of Chinese and 25 speakers of Russian, as well as a similar production test in Chinese and Russian made by 25 native speakers of Chinese and 25 native speakers of Russian. The test involved 17 problems to be solved by the participants by making a request (nine) or an offer (eight) (for a detailed examination of the project, see Zhang 2019).

I shall be using the term *linguaculture* and define it as a structured system of symbolic, indexical and iconic signs that functions as a common means of communication, as a common frame of reference and as a cultural guide for all members of a speech community to act and interact in its public and private spheres. This means that linguaculture not only consists of a lexicon and a grammar

of a specific language, but also of ideas, feelings and values of the members of the speech community in question and how they are represented in the lexicon and how the use of its grammar reflects traditions, norms and rules of the speech community. In short, linguaculture combines a static perspective with a dynamic one, which is significant in relation to my concerns here.

2.2. How problems are solved in the Chinese linguaculture

When dealing with requests or offers, Chinese differs from English and Russian. The Chinese variant of the imperative (signalled by intonation alone), e.g. *chi*! 'Eat (quickly)!', seems only to be used at home and the interrogative sentence form cannot be used for directives – the interrogative sentence particle *ma* will always need an answer in direct contrast to English, where a non-verbal reaction is the right answer to a question used as a directive, e.g. *Why don't you sit down*? This leaves the declarative sentence form as the only sentence form in Chinese to be employed.

Earlier Chinese studies confirm that the declarative sentence form is the only form to be used when dealing with directives, but they use a different terminology from their Western colleagues. They use *direct request*, which might give the impression that Chinese speakers use the imperative form. When Chinese scholars (e.g. Song, 1994; Gao 1999) argue that Chinese native speakers tend to be more direct than native English speakers, they do not mean that Chinese speakers use the imperative mood form. For them a direct request will be a request where you use a verb in the first person, for instance, *qǐng zuò* 'I beg you to sit down' which counts as a very polite utterance. All variants of this kind (I want you, I tell you, I ask you, etc.) are called direct requests by Chinese scholars, but they all belong to the declarative sentence form. It is crucial to underline that these declarative utterances appear in first person. This makes good sense since Chinese is a speaker-oriented language that focuses on the speaker's experience or mental state. The results from our production test confirm that the declarative sentence form with a first-person subject is the only sentence form used by Chinese speakers when they speak their mother tongue. When Chinese speak English, the data show that the declarative sentence form is the unmarked and preferred form. In this way, all directive utterances function as symptoms of the speaker's mental state, and they are easily understood by the hearer because they are "direct" in their meaning (cf. above).

2.3. Problem solving in the Russian linguaculture

When issuing a directive speech act, Russians use the imperative mood without any flavour of impoliteness. A military order is issued by using the infinitive form (see also below) – the imperative sentence form can never count as an order (for a detailed analysis, see Durst-Andersen 2019). Russians use the imperative in the private sphere of life as well as in the public sphere. Russian speakers tend to use a direct speech act instead of one of the indirect alternatives when issuing directives. The preference for the imperative mood appears very clearly from all extensive studies (cf. Larina, 2009; Bolden, 2017). Our production data with native speakers confirm that Russians strongly prefer the imperative sentence form, but they also use the declarative sentence form. Data from the English production test with Russian speakers demonstrate a less-clear picture, although the imperative is the most frequently used form. That the Russian imperative functions as a neutral form might have to do with the fact that Russian speakers have at their disposal two imperative forms: a perfective as well as an imperfective variant. There is, however, also another important difference in pragmatic usage between Russian speakers, on the one hand, and British English and Chinese speakers on the other. In Russian, the infinitive form is used to issue directives by authorities, for instance, military orders at all levels, whereas this is not the case in English or in Chinese.

The Russian imperative thus functions as a model of the situation desired by the speaker or the hearer, i.e. the specific wording of the imperative utterance tells the hearer how to execute the speaker's request or offer: *Sadites'* (ipf) and *sjad'te* (pf) 'Sit down!' instructs the hearer to produce an activity the effect of which is that s/he will be sitting (on a chair). In this way, the imperative is third-

person oriented and directly points to the future situation desired by the speaker (for more about this, see below).

2.4. Problem solving in the British English linguaculture
If we turn to the British English speech community, it appears from our GEBCom data that its members use all three sentence forms in the vast majority of all 17 scenarios. Traditionally, it has been claimed (cf. Searle 1969, 1983; Brown & Levinson 1987; Haugh 2015) that the interrogative sentence form is the most polite, since it does not present a threat to the hearer or does not involve any pressure from the point of view of the speaker. The British English data involving all three sentence forms do not reveal any difference in the degree of politeness. Therefore, we had to analyse the UK data for offers (we focussed on that) in a new way, and the result of our analysis can be seen in Figure 3. It forms a decision tree for directives that is meant to account for the logic of the use of directives in British English based on our production test (this analysis can, however, also be applied to the Russian imperative and the Chinese declarative, as appears below; see Fig. 3).

Figure 3: Decision Tree for Directives
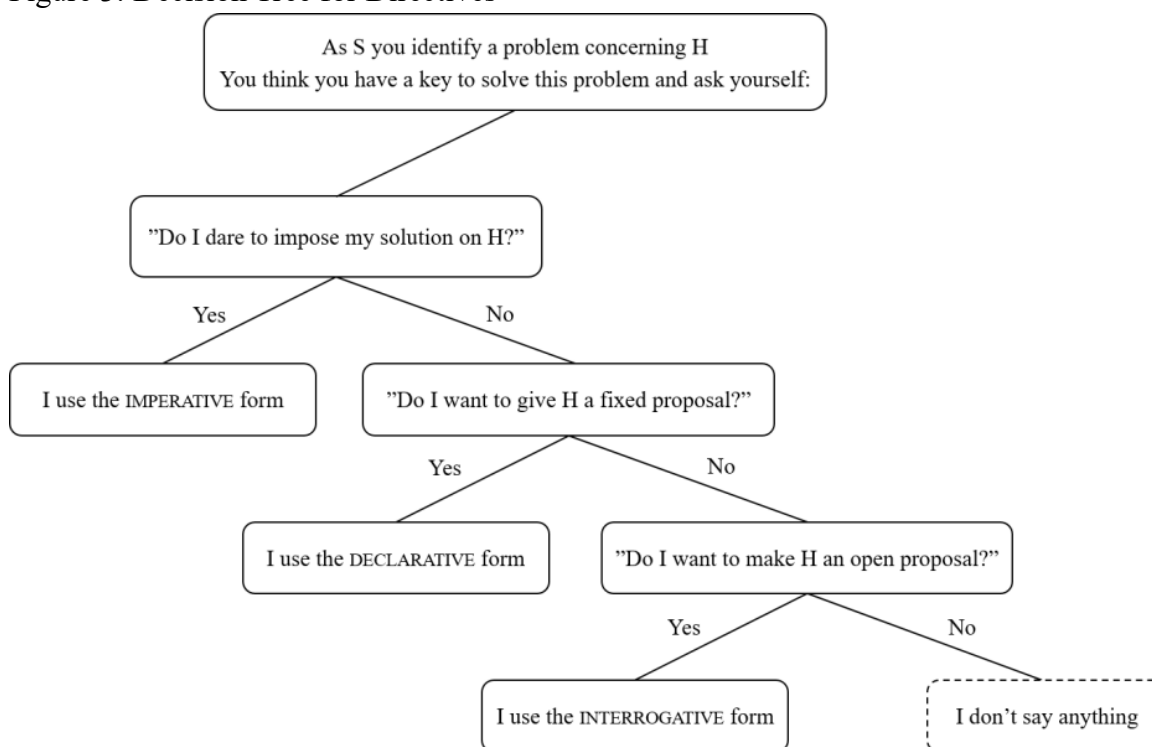
The Decision Tree for Directives (The DTD Model) includes three levels formed as a hierarchy. The hierarchy reflects two things. First, the hierarchy can be said to indicate that the strength of illocutionary force is viewed as a continuum from strong to weak. Secondly, it can also be regarded as a continuum ranging from directness to indirectness.

Faced with the hearer's problem, the speaker has to consider the question: *Where does the right solution to the problem lie?* The question can be answered in three distinct ways. In the scenario referred to below, the speaker wants to help the hearer so s/he can take a print of a paper thereby interrupting her/his own printing:

- The solution lies in the situation itself – if the speaker thinks that the right solution is found in the situation itself, then s/he will use the imperative form: *Just make your copy quickly*!

- The solution lies with the speaker – if the speaker thinks that s/he her/himself has the right solution to the problem, s/he will use the declarative form: *You can go first if you want to.*
- The solution lies with the hearer – if the speaker thinks that the hearer her/himself has the right solution to the problem, s/he will use the interrogative form: *Would you like to use the machine*?

This is how we explain why and when the British English speakers use the three forms. The degree of politeness or impoliteness caused by the specific choice can be explained by the fact that when using the imperative, the speaker gives a solution that is non-negotiable; when using a declarative, the speaker gives a proposal that has to be negotiated with the hearer; and when using the interrogative, the speaker gives the hearer an open proposal, i.e. the hearer may write the text of the contract just as s/he wants to. The presence or lack of politeness is thus a concomitant effect of the semantics of the three sentence forms.

In the following, I shall attempt to link the preference for a specific sentence form to a specific understanding of face.

3. Politeness and face
3.1. Introductory remarks
The concept of politeness has been a hotly debated topic after Brown & Levinson's (1987) seminal work, based on Goffman (1967). Since then, it became a tradition to employ 'face' as the main universal concept, including the new distinction between positive face (a person's desire to be liked) and negative face (a person's desire not to be imposed upon). In the 1990s, Eastern scholars challenged the universality of politeness and tried to highlight the content of face in an Asian context, however, without any effect. This concerns Lim & Bowers (1991: 142), for instance, who distinguish three types of face. Gu (1990) and Mao (1994) both point out that Western scholars overemphasize the negative face, and they attempt to draw our attention to the meaning of Chinese face by referring to the distinction made by Hu (1944) between moral face, i.e. *liǎn*, and social face, i.e. *miànzi* (corresponding more or less to Bourdieu's notions of internal and external habitus, cf. Bourdieu 1994).

I argue that it is crucial to differentiate three distinct understandings of face: first-person's face, second-person's face and third-person's face. All types of face are, of course, present in all types of societies and cultures when people are engaged in communication, but only one seems to be prioritized in a particular linguaculture.

3.2. The Anglo-American notion of politeness and face
It is clear that the Anglo-American approach (I include American English in my description) is oriented towards the face of the second person, the hearer's face. This appears from the fact that, in the literature on the subject, the concepts of positive and negative face relate solely to the hearer. When people from an Anglo-American linguaculture think about face, the only kind of face that comes to mind is the hearer's face. It is not a coincidence that the slogan 'The customer is always right' was coined by a British English-speaking person from London. The focus is on the other person, be it the hearer in communication or the customer in business. The mere possibility of using the interrogative mood, in connection with directives to give the hearer an open proposal, points to the same interest in the other part, i.e. the hearer. This possibility is excluded in Chinese and Russian. The focus on the hearer has the implication that the speaker is afraid of "touching" the hearer in the sense of imposing something on the hearer, for instance, by using the imperative mood. The speaker, so to say, does not want to step on the hearer's toes. This seems the shortest way to explain how Anglo-American politeness functions.

3.3. The Chinese notion of face and politeness

I shall argue that the Chinese linguaculture is oriented towards the face of the first person, the speaker's face. In Chinese society, one cannot use the imperative outside one's home, one cannot use the interrogative as a request and, instead, the speaker uses the declarative form with focus on her/himself. This is a clear sign of the fact that the Chinese linguaculture prioritizes the speaker's face, either the speaker's moral or inner face (liǎn) or the speaker's social or outer face (miànzi). According to Hu (1944), a child is born with a full moral face but with an empty social face. This means that, from birth, a Chinese person tries to keep the inner face and to gain some outer face. To lose one's moral face has far more serious consequences than to lose one's social face. If one loses the moral face, then one might lose one's place in an in-group or in society as a whole. If one loses the social face, one loses influence, but one will still have a place within the group or within society. In short, when a Chinese scholar reads or hears 'face', s/he will automatically think about her/his own face, i.e. first-person's face, because one's place in society is constantly at stake. Politeness is thus strongly associated with not losing face and impoliteness with losing face.

3.4. The Russian notion of face and politeness

I will argue that the Russian linguaculture is oriented towards the face of the third person, the situation itself or society's face (cf. Durst-Andersen 2019). The speaker, the hearer and the situation in reality make up a micro-society within the big society. The focus on the (neutral) third person is typical. Russians prefer the imperative mood when issuing a request or an offer because they are focused on the solution of the speaker's problem (request) or the hearer's problem (offer). The problem constitutes an issue shared by the speaker and the hearer – a problem that must be solved immediately to remove imbalances or obstacles in society. To employ the imperative form as a completely neutral form presupposes that the speaker and the hearer are together in solving the problem, and that they prefer balance to imbalance and harmony to disharmony. Thus, the imperative form itself can be argued to create contact between two people and to have a binding effect in Russian society, as odd as it may sound in the ears of people from the Anglo-American linguaculture. In short, when a Russian scholar reads or hears 'face', s/he will immediately think about face as a neutral term that is common to both the speaker and the hearer. This means that direct contact is associated with politeness and no contact with impoliteness.

4. Modality, logic and societal logic

4.1. Modality and societal logic in the British English linguaculture

In British English, we find a sharp distinction between epistemic modality and non-epistemic modality, the latter consisting of alethic modality and deontic modality. The distinction, however, is traditionally described as a distinction between epistemic and deontic modality or root modality (Leech 1983; Palmer 2014). It is maintained that "alethic modality has been the main concern of logicians, but it has little place in ordinary language" (Palmer 2014: 6) and it has always been subsumed under epistemic modality.

It makes no sense to sharply distinguish the two meanings, i.e. the epistemic meaning and the deontic meaning, if they are not separated by the English language but by English speakers (possibly an effect of its orientation towards the second person). The utterance *He may come tomorrow* is ambiguous: it has an epistemic reading, i.e. *It is possible that he comes tomorrow*, and a deontic meaning, i.e. *He is permitted to come tomorrow*. I acknowledge that English speakers are good at distinguishing the epistemic reading from the deontic reading (they are forced to develop this ability since the English language does not express it overtly), but this is not tantamount to saying that the English language makes such a distinction. It does not, if we look at modal verbs: *He can come tomorrow* is unambiguously alethic and means that *it is possible for the person to come tomorrow*. However, if the utterance is made second-person oriented, one gets a deontic reading: *You can come*

tomorrow. Now it involves a permission, i.e. *You have my permission to come tomorrow*.

In contrast to Russian, English has at its disposal a lot of epistemic means, but they do not distinguish between alethic and deontic modality. Since epistemic modality concerns beliefs, whereas alethic and deontic modality concerns knowledge, I shall argue that English distinguishes between epistemic modality and non-epistemic modality, i.e. between beliefs and knowledge, but with no distinction between knowledge of laws of nature and knowledge of laws of society. I place alethic modality together with deontic modality. This alternative look at English modality has its advantages.

Having arrived at a distinction between epistemic vs. non-epistemic modality in English, it would be natural to ask the following question: How is it possible to explain the fact that English does not distinguish between alethic and deontic modality. And why is it true – as Palmer argues – that logicians are mainly concerned with alethic logic and often ignore deontic logic? My answer is the following: Just as Western logicians derive all kinds of modalities from the alethic notion of possibility (represented by a diamond, ◊, i.e. possibility is ◊, impossibility is ¬◊, necessity is ¬◊¬ and unnecessity is ◊¬), the British-English society is built on the alethic notion of possibility, i.e. the logic that applies to the laws of nature has been transferred to and has become the logic of the British-English society and the logic of many so-called Western societies. This explains why Western societies are classified as individualist cultures (cf. Triandis 2018): What is possible for one person is not possible for another person. The focus on nature is evident in Western countries. People do not want to destroy nature and want to visit nature without losing the illusion of being inside nature itself. Western architecture stresses the importance of building houses that nicely fit with the surroundings – the ideal being that the boundaries between nature and buildings are not visible. If people's knowledge of the laws of nature has been used to build the rules and laws of society, it is completely understandable why people in their language do not distinguish between alethic and deontic modality. One might argue that the mixture of nature and society is reflected in the English language. The focus on the possibilities of the individual in the society is also reflected in the crucial role epistemic modality, i.e. subjective beliefs, plays in the English language. In short, I shall argue that the British-English societal logic derives from alethic logic based on the notion of possibility from which all other modalities are derived, i.e. impossibility, necessity and non-necessity.

4.2. Modality and societal logic in the Chinese linguaculture

As a person raised in a Western society and trained in traditional logic, I was astonished that the Chinese participants showed difficulty in cancelling an appointment, because the English and the Russian participants did not show any difficulty. While the English participants viewed "breaking a law" as yielding a possibility to do something else (and possibility is good), the Chinese participants conceived cancellation of an appointment as breaking a law, which might have serious consequences for the personal relationship between the speaker and the hearer. I realized that the Chinese society must be grounded on a different logic from the Western alethic logic.

Since the Chinese only use the imperative at home, since the Chinese language has no really ordinary modal verbs, but instead particles for various speech acts (*a* 'immediate impression'*, ya* 'wondering'*, ba* 'recommendation'*, ma* 'question'*, le* 'experience' and *ne* 'information'), and since it has no regular ways to express permission or prohibition (*Beg you not to park* is the Chinese way of saying 'Parking is not allowed'), I was forced to think in a completely alternative direction. I formed the hypothesis that Chinese societal logic is built on obligation, i.e. a deontic type of modality. From obligation (represented by □) all other modalities are derived, i.e. cancellation of obligation (¬□), permission (¬□¬) and prohibition (□¬). This would not only explain the Chinese data but also why the Chinese society is claimed to be a collectivist culture: Obligation is for everyone without exception. It would also explain why permission to do something is understood as a signal to do it in an Anglo-American context but lacks this appellative element in the Chinese society: *It is not obligatory not to do so* makes room for contemplation rather than action. Moreover, it would explain

why sights in nature are often transformed into mini-societies in nature. The Chinese societal logic that builds on deontic modality has been transferred into nature, i.e. the opposite of what we see in Western-oriented societies.

4.3. Modality and societal logic in the Russian linguaculture

I mentioned that Russian has two imperative forms, a perfective form and an imperfective form. It appears that aspect has no aspectual meaning in this case, but modal meanings. In Durst-Andersen (1995) it has been demonstrated that the perfective aspect in Russian is linked to alethic modality that is concerned with laws of nature, whereas the imperfective aspect is connected to deontic modality that is concerned with laws of society. It seems to be the case that the distinction between alethic and deontic modality plays an important role in the Russian language. The focus on knowledge of the laws of nature and the laws of society should be compared to the absence of grammatical means in Russian to express epistemic modality, i.e. laws of the human mind (Durst-Andersen, 2011). This means that the Russian language pays a lot of attention to objective knowledge and little attention to subjective beliefs.

The incorporation of two types of logic that both relate to the realm of objective knowledge that is common to all members of a society, combined with the "excorporation" of epistemic modality that relates to the realm of subjective knowledge that is characteristic of each individual member of the society, explains why Russians score low (39 out of 100) on Hofstede's individualism-collectivism dimension (Hofstede 1991) (note that the term *individualism* was coined by de Tocqueville in 1831 and the term *collectivism* by Kluckhohn in 1953). Russia does not belong to individualist cultures (United Kingdom has a score of 89), but neither does it seem to be as collectivistic as China, with a score of 20 (only to show that Russian society stands out compared to the two others in question). It turns out that it is very difficult to make Russian culture (and other countries as well) fit into Hofstede's binarily defined dimensions. In Hofstede's terms, Russian culture is described as a culture with high power distance and a high level of competition, but at the same time it is a feminine and not a masculine culture. Normally, high power distance and masculinity go together, as is the case with US and Chinese societies. Things do not make sense in Hofstede's framework. The Russian society and culture seem to belong to a third variety that is impossible to grasp in a framework employing binary thinking. Let us try to define this third variety.

I shall argue that the distinction between the infinitive and the imperative reflects a distinction between the authoritative level and the non-authoritative level of Russian society. The first level is made up of the authorities that are found at the macro level, in the form of government, as well as at the micro level in the form of various institutions, be they big (as the Russian army) or small (as a typical Russian school). These authorities have power to issue rules and laws that must be followed by all members belonging to the non-authoritative level of the Russian society, i.e. ordinary people.

The non-authoritative level of the Russian society consists of the public sphere and the private sphere. The interesting thing is that the imperative form is used both in the private and in the public sphere. If the speaker has a problem of his own and therefore needs something that can be satisfied via the hearer, s/he makes a request by using the imperative (*Uvol'te* (pf) Ivanova! 'Fire Ivanov!' (because you can do it)) or the vocative (*Len*!/*Lena*! 'Lena! (I need you)'). If the speaker notices that the hearer has a problem and therefore needs something that can be satisfied by the speaker, s/he will make the hearer an offer by using the imperative (*Berite* (ipf) *chashku kofe*! 'Have a cup of coffee' (You have my permission)) or by using the vocative (*Len*!/*Lena*! 'Lena!' (you need me)'). When one uses an imperative form or a vocative form, one automatically establishes contact with another person, always psychologically, but often also physically. Interestingly enough, the notion of contact plays a crucial role in the Russian prepositional case system, where the locative and the accusative are contact cases, while the genitive, the dative and the instrumental are non-contact cases (cf. Durst-Andersen & Lorentzen 2015).

The sharp distinction between the perfective and the imperfective aspect in the imperative mood shows that Russian people distinguish between two types of knowledge, viz. knowledge of laws of nature and laws of society. Both types of logic are present in the Russian society. It seems to be the case that the Russian society (and probably not as the only one) is built on a mixture of individualism and collectivism. I hesitate to give a name to this kind of society, but I shall argue that the notion of togetherness plays a big part in it. It presupposes the notion of individualism and the notion of collectivism and implies the notion of direct contact between two or more people. One bid could be individualistic collectivism, i.e. Russian society has focus on the individual person and her/his possibilities as long as s/he does not break the spoken or unspoken rules and norms of its culture.

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