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ASSOCIATION-VERBAL NETWORK AS A MODEL OF THE LINGUISTIC PICTURE OF THE WORLD

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Abstract

Perspective investigations of the world picture are related to the problem of its embodiment in words and correspondence to the latest fragment of reality. The data for such studies are obtained while comparing fragments of national world pictures and detecting their conceptual disparities. With Moscow Psycholinguistic School, the linguistic picture is regarded an invariant image of the world, typical of a given culture and fixed in its vocabulary. The invariant image of the world is believed to correspond with values as social entities. The language being a structure of activity is the sign reflection of reality, whose elements attribute a definite importance only within a definite culture. Therefore, a particular world picture study will inevitably address the meaning as the knowledge associated with the word. The methods currently applied by the Russian psycholinguistics, the associative experiment among them, provide data depicting the collective experience of native language speakers / culture bearers. With the advent of associative lexicography, the model of everyday ordinary native speaker / culture bearer consciousness has been developed. It depicts true interactions and interdependence between the meaning and importance (F.de Saussure) of a definite word both within the associative verbal network (AVN) and a particular association field. This way studied fragments of the linguistic picture of the world may vary in terms of the used language, as well as the regional peculiarities.

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1. Introduction

1.1. The picture of the world has long been studied and speculated over by various scientific disciplines. In linguistics, a researcher deals with a linguistic picture of the world, and as a rule, investigations are either directed at the analysis of key culture concepts (Wierzbicka, 1997); or attempts are made to reconstruct a holistic linguistic picture of the world. The latter demands regarding lexis a system, albeit the concept itself can be dated back to the works of Humboldt (2018).

1.2. With Moscow Psycholinguistic School, the linguistic picture is regarded an invariant image of the world, typical of a given culture and fixed in its vocabulary. The invariant image of the world is believed to correspond with values as social entities. In contrast to the linguistic understanding of the problem, the objective meaning rather than the verbal one is accepted as a unit of consciousness. A free associative experiment, embracing a large number of respondents, native speakers of a definite language / culture bearers, is a means to reconstruct the picture of the world (Rudakova & Sternin, 2016; Ufimtseva & Balyasnikova, 2019). Furthermore, the obtained for each word stimulus associative field can be considered a semantic gestalt (Yu.N. Karaulov), where definite semantic zones are distinguished, being differently filled in accordance with the spoken language or culture. So, a psycholinguist proceeds from the fact that the image of the world of a native speaker of any language / culture is systematic. The systematicity differs from culture to culture, and so differs the systematicity of the knowledge affiliated to word equivalents.

2. Problem Statement

2.1. As we see it today, psycholinguists face the most interesting research challenge to “compare “worldviews”, pictures of the world created with the help of languages” (Alpatov 2001, p. 66; Postovalova, 2017), since it requires the development of a general theory to perform the comparison, which, in turn, rests on the problem of linguistic manifestation of the picture of the world and its correspondence to a fragment of reality.

2.2. The data for such a study are obtained from interlanguage comparisons of fragments of national pictures of the world when conceptual discrepancies can be registered. Language as a structure of activity is the outcome of reality having been reflected in signs with structure elements acquiring a certain significance only within the system of a particular culture. Therefore, any particular direction to be taken while studying the world picture or its fragment implies a study of the meaning as the knowledge associated with the word. Also, the meaning reflects a fragment of the objective world in the consciousness of a native speaker / culture bearer, with its properties, connections, and relations (Leonard, Ufimtseva, & Markovina, 2019).

3. Research Questions

Studying the meaning as knowledge associated with the word suggests that meanings form a certain system (structure), and the properties of a particular meaning can be seen only via its relations with other members of the system. And here the concept introduced by F. de Saussure, namely the concept of significance, is of use. He believed, significance is created only by social life, i.e. the collective experience of native speakers / culture bearers (Saussure, 1977). Therefore, each word being a part of a definite

structure (system) has both the knowledge corresponding it in the experience of a native speaker / culture bearer, and also its significance, i.e. its "weight" in the system.

The current study focuses on the interrelations between the word meaning and its significance in the everyday ordinary consciousness of a native speaker of a language / culture bearer.

4. Purpose of the Study

The study aims at demonstrating how the region of residence affects the content of consciousness of a native speaker of the Russian language / Russian culture bearer along with the systemic nature of consciousness. The Republic of Crimea was chosen as a region for research; the obtained data were compared with the results of similar experiments with residents of the European part of the Russian Federation and residents of Siberia and the Far East.

5. Research Methods

The study employed the method of mass free associative experiment. Students of various Crimean universities, aged from 17 to 25, men and women in equal proportions, permanent residents of the Crimea who had lived there for at least 10 years by the time of the survey were involved as respondents. A word list of 1000 stimuli was used, with the words previously utilised to collect material for the Russian Regional Associative Dictionary (Shaposhnikova & Romanenko, 2014; Ufimtseva & Cherkasova, 2018). The experiment was carried out in writing, each respondent received a questionnaire with 100 stimuli from the initial list. Based on the experimental materials, an electronic database was created that later built up the basis of the analysis.

6. Findings

6.1. We assume, the associative-verbal network (AVN) developed with the materials of the Russian Associative Dictionary (Karaulov, Cherkasova, Ufimtseva, Sorokin, & Tarasov, 2002), is the model of everyday linguistic consciousness of a native speaker that satisfies the requirements for systematicity and comprehensiveness. The AVN is an arranged space with a balanced frequency; it has 103,000 thousand different peaks, i.e. different words that make up it up. The network possesses a core (a little over 500 words) and peripherals. It was this modeling method that allowed us to identify the meaning and significance of the words included in it and served as the basis for numerous studies (Debrenne, 2016; Elenevskaya & Ovchinnikova, 2016; Goldin, 2015; Sánchez, 2015; Ufimtseva & Balyasnikova, 2019).

6.2. Of interest results were obtained in the course of studying regional features of the linguistic picture with bilingual residents of several Russian regions (the Republic of Komi, Tatarstan, Buryatia, Sakha (Yakutia)) and Russians living in these regions. The analysis showed that the language of the experiment influenced the experimental outcome for bilinguals, whereas monolingual Russians were influenced to some extent by the indigenous culture, both the phenomena being reflected in the obtained linguistic pictures of the world (Ufimtseva, 2017).

6.3. As it was previously noted, in our Crimean experiment aimed at revealing the features of the linguistic picture of the world for the young generation of Crimeans, since the Crimea had become part of

the Russian Federation only in 2014. The obtained experimental data was then compared to those from the Russian Associative Dictionary (Karaulov et al., 2002) and two issues of the Russian Regional Associative Dictionaries, SIBAS (Shaposhnikova & Romanenko, 2014) and EURAS (Ufimtseva & Cherkasova, 2018).

6.4. As an example, study the associative fields obtained for the stimulus ‘zemlya’ (the word can be rendered in English as ‘earth’, ‘land’, ‘ground’, etc.) (see Table 01).

Table 01. Reactions obtained for stimulus ‘zemlya’ (%)

Experiment in the Republic of Crimea	Russian Associative Dictionary, RAD	Russian Regional Associative Dictionary, EVRAS	Russian Regional Associative Dictionary, SIBAS
Planeta (planet) 14,0	Kruglaya (round) 12,6	Kruglaya (round) 15,7	Kruglaya (round) 16,3
Kruglaya (round) 11,9	Nebo (sky) 7,1	Planeta (planet) 13,7	Planeta (planet) 14,1
Pukhom* 6,1	Planeta (planet) 6,4	Nebo (sky) 4,4	Pochva (soil) 5,6
ZHizn' (life) 2,9	Rodnaya (native) 4,8	SHar (sphere) 3,9	SHar (sphere,) 4,2
Pochva (soil) 2,9	Obetovannaya (Promised) 3,2	Pochva (soil) 3,1	Nebo (sky) 2,6
Rodnaya (native) 2,5	CHernaya (black) 3,1	Mat' (mother) 2,8	Obetovannaya (Promised) 2,4
Nebo (sky) 2,2	Voda (water) 2,6	Trava (grass) 2,8	Rodnaya (native) 2,4
Rodina (homeland) 2,2	SHar (sphere) 2,5	Vozduh (air) 2,0	Mir (world) 1,8
SHar (sphere) 2,2	Vselennaya (Universe) 2,3	Rodina (homeland) 2,0	Trava (grass) 1,8
Dom (house) 1,8	Moya (my) 2,0	Rodnaya (native) 1,8	Vertitsya (spins) 1,6
Mir (world) 1,8	Lyudej (of men) 1,5	v illyuminatore (port-hole) 1,7	Bol'shaya (big) 1,4
Mat' (mother) 1,4	Nasha (our) 1,5	Mir (world) 1,5	Voda (water) 1,4
Nasha (our) 1,4	Bol'shaya (big) 1,4	Obetovannaya (promised) 1,3	Dom (house) 1,4
Obetovannaya (Promised) 1,4	Luna (moon) 1,4	Rodina (homeland) 1,3	Mat' (mother) 1,4
Plodorodie (fecundity) 1,4	Vertitsya (spins) 1,2	Syraya (damp) 1,3	Pole (field) 1,2
Voda (water) 1,1	Vozduh (air) 1,2	Voda (water) 1,1	ZHizn' (life) 1,0
Derevo (tree) 1,1	Syraya (damp) 1,2	Gryaz' (dirt) 1,1	Kosmos 1,0
Krug (a circle) 1,1	i lyudi (and people) 1,1	Dom (house) 1,1	Plodorodnaya (fecund) 1,0
lyudi (people) 1,1	Teplaya (warm) 1,1	ZHizn' (life) 1,1	Rodina (homeland) 1,0
Plodorodnaya (fecund) 1,1	Trava (grass) 1,1	Krug (a circle) 1,1	CHernaya (black) 1,0
Trava (grass) 1,1	Kosmos (space) 0,9	Plodorodnaya (fecund) 1,1	v illyuminatore (port-hole) 0,8
	Mat' (mother) 0,9	Moya (my) 0,9	Pukhom 0,8

* the reaction refers to a Russian analogue of the phrase ‘rest in peace’, only wishing a comfortable sleep under an earthen duvet as soft as birds feathers

As it is seen from Table 01, the systematicity of the association fields with respondents from the Crimea is different from that obtained in other parts of Russia. There are also differences in the answer distribution. For Crimeans 'zemlya' is a *planet*, then it is *round*, for the rest it is the opposite. Besides, the reaction 'pukhom' goes the third (6,1%), though it refers to a deceased. An analogous answer was obtained with Siberians, though with a far less frequency (0,8%). The Crimeans more often associate **zemlya** with *life*, their say it is *our*, whereas for RAD it is both *my* and *our*, and for EVRAS respondents only *my*. Moreover, Crimeans see the *fertility* of their **zemlya**.

7. Conclusion

Moscow Psycholinguistics School has developed the concept of the associative-verbal network (AVN). AVN is a model of the linguistic picture of the world within the everyday consciousness of a native speaker / culture bearer. The network assists investigation of factors impacting the linguistic picture, its systematicity and content. For Russian language native speakers / culture bearers these are the factors of region and non-native cultural environment.

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