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WHAT IS NECESSARY FOR THE GENERAL THEORY OF LINGUISTIC CONSCIOUSNESS?

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Abstract

The paper discusses the theoretical and methodological prerequisites for the creation of a general theory of linguistic consciousness, including a set of experiments capable of testing and possibly partially refuting some of its points. The main idea of such a theory is the simultaneous coverage of external (social) and internal (personal) factors in their influence on language viewed from the anthropocentric perspectives. The author proposes main principles, general statements and possible challenges to face for such theory which needs the appropriate theory of language, universal methods of describing different aspects and forms of the object, and principles from which the phenomenological properties of the object and the methodological characteristics of the theory are deduced. The provisions of the general theory of linguistic consciousness and the underlying experimental researches will allow to determine how the internal (emotions, values, etc.) and external (age, profession, etc.) conditions influence changes of the meanings of words and of their interconnections. The characteristics of the language fixed in the LC are not located in the person's mind, but arise between the person and the world interacting with each other. The linguistic consciousness researches should not proceed from some postulated general definition worked out by theorizing, but come to such definition by analyzing specific linguistic facts with the possibility of its subsequent revision due to new facts.

1. Introduction

Nowadays an impressive number of scientific works devoted to the study of linguistic consciousness (hereinafter – the LC) have appeared treating this term in many different ways. Thus, the LC can be interpreted as a part of the individual consciousness that provides speech (Popova & Sternin, 2007) or as a feature of human speech behavior (Aleshchenko, 2008)or as a form of mind reflection of reality through the language (Fedosyukina, 2005) or as a synonym for the mental lexicon (Borgoyakova, 2003) or as a collection of images of consciousness materialized by linguistic signs (Goroshko, 2001; Privalova 2006; Sergiev 2010; Ufimtseva & Tarasov, 2009). There are works whithout a clear definition of the LC (Bratchikova, 2006; Ilinov, 2009; Malevinsky, 2006; Shamanova, 2009).

Despite such a variety of opinions, the meaninglessness of the definitions that the authors give to the LC is vivid. The definition of a concept must have two important properties or correspond to two requirements. First, it must fix the system of internal and external relations which correspond to the object of scientific cognition represent it in the form of a generalized ideal object, and operations on mapping or constructing of the object. Second, the concept, being a generalization, must contain the most essential law underlying and explaining the phenomenon under study.

2. Problem Statement

One of the most widely used definitions of the LC corresponds to the first requirement, but not to the second one. This definition is following: "Linguistic consciousness is knowledge associated with linguistic signs and used for excommunication through disclosing the primary and secondary images of consciousness. Primary images, according to A.N. Leontiev, is the person's knowledge formed by the process of the real world objects perception, secondary images are primary images used as perceptual standards for subsequent acts of perception" (Ufimtseva & Tarasov, 2009). Such definition can **indicate** the object under study (or a collection of objects) and its generalize model, but cannot **predict** the behavior of the object, a change in its internal and / or external links with using only its model and without operating of the object itself. This definition cannot explain how changes in internal and / or external links of an object affect its functioning and characteristics. This can be a definition of the language as a person's property but not as an abstract system. Language is an open self-organizing functional system of images associated with the bodies of signs that serves through the expression of thoughts and feelings for the organization of one's own and others' behavior. Image in Russian psychology and psycholinguistics traditions is not the same with mental representation, it's rather process and simultaneously result of reflection of an object by the means and in the form of psychic phenomena including possible changes of this object and its links to other ones.

It is significant that the various interpretations of the LC connect it either with language as an individual phenomenon or with language as a social phenomenon: fixation in the language of reflection in the **individual** consciousness of objects **external** to it. This tendency shows the aspiration of scientists to find a concept that would link these two aspects of the language, which would allow us to trace the relationship between the dynamics of linguistic phenomena viewed from group perspectives and from the persons' perspectives. We deliberately talk here about the group but not the society since the characteristics

of language as a social phenomenon is the most general case of language as a group phenomenon when the boundaries of a group are determined by the scale of society as a whole, and not by profession, social status, etc.

3.   Research Questions

The necessity of a general concept and a general theory is dictated not only by theorizing, but also by empiric material of experimental researches.

First, we should mention the works by A.A. Zalevskaya and her co-workers on the psycholinguistic portrayal of lexis (Zalevskaya, 2010a; 2010b; 2011) held "at the turn of the century and epoch for the Russian culture" (in the early 90-s) that show on a large material how words acquire new meaning and change existing one due to social, economic and political upheavals. E.I. Goroshko studied the general and specific features in mental lexicons of representatives of different social groups, namely the associative connections of words depending on the gender-age characteristics of people, the conditions of their life, etc. (Goroshko, 2001). The general conclusion of her research is that social and biographical factors influence the structure of the associative field both quantitatively and qualitatively (Ibid). L.P. Inozemtseva explores the peculiarities of verbal reactions to the words *преподаватель* (teacher) and *препод* (pejorative from teacher) in their correlations with the age of students. The author connects the revealed difference with the changes in the Russian education system caused by the inclusion of education in the sphere of services have dramatic consequences for the expectations and demands of students, reflected in the meanings of the words (Inozemtseva, 2012).

The relevance of studies that take into account the influence of social factors on the formation of a mental lexicon is seen in the creation of associative dictionaries of a new type: "Associative Dictionary of Saratov and Saratov Region Schoolchildren", "Russian Regional Associative Dictionary-Thesaurus EVRAS", two-volume "Russian Regional Associative Dictionary (Siberia and Far East)" and others.

Our researches (Yakovlev, Manhirova &Sluchaeva, 2015; Yakovlev, 2016a; Yakovlev, 2016b; Yakovlev &Elizarova (Telesheva), 2016) show the dependence of the meanings of words on the socio-cultural and even geographical features of people's lives. The material and methodology differ from the days of the week as stimuli without taking into account the "external" characteristics of the subjects (age, gender, social status, etc.) to the presentation of the terms of linguistics to linguistic students. However, their general conclusion is that a word reflects not the phenomena of the surrounding reality as they are, but their images, distorted by the personal experience and emotions. The word meaning manifest and fix a peculiar dialectic between a certain phenomenon of reality and its experience by a person; the most typical situations of interaction with phenomena and objects are reflected in the meaning of the appropriate word, but the very meaning of this word affects the person's attitude to this or that phenomenon and its components (consequently attitude to the person's activities in such situations). If the experience of a group of people is similar in one way or another (for instance, the experience of the students' communication with teachers) so the material of the associative experiment conducted in this group manifests the appropriate regular trends (see the results of the experiment in (Yakovlev & Elizarova (Telesheva), 2016) and their verification and confirmation in (Yakovlev, 2017) such as emotions and personal experience reflected in reactions of an associative experiment.

4.   Purpose of the Study

It is extremely important, with such a diversity of experimental studies, to have a general conception of the LC which would allow to explain from the unified theoretical and methodological basis the trends manifested in different empirical material, to combine further these formally different trends in order to derive the most common regular and sustainable links between external and internal factors of language. The dialectic mentioned above between the phenomenon of reality (external factors) and its experience of the person (internal factors) regularly manifested in the empirical materials of researches, but manifested in different ways depending on the material and method, should find their explanation from a common positions and not from the standpoint of some particular theoretical scheme, invented ad hoc and not allowing to generalize them and connect them with each other.

In short, the general the LC theory is needed in order to generalize and explain the relationship between internal (personal) and external (group, in the limit – social) factors of the life of words. Consequently, within the framework of such a general theory the very concept of the LC should encompass the most significant features of the mental lexicons of a group of people and their ordering (changes) depending on external and internal factors, as well as a generalized reflection of the individuals' attitudes to these factors. the LC is, therefore, a theoretical generalization of such links and their regular manifestation in experimental linguistic material. In this case, the concept of the LC can distinguish and fix in the theoretical models the basic law underlying the language as the person's property, the intrapsychic (internal) language factors in their connection with interpsychic (external) ones. Moreover, the LC should fix this connection not subjectively-methodologically (only a new point of view on the usual phenomena), but objectively-methodologically, as a special type of connection between the personal features and the social features in the language. It is not just a "social plus individual", but a new type of really existing links which consist in the fact that the social phenomena of the language are united with personal experience, but regular rather than accidental. As a result, personal phenomena (better to say processes) reflected in a word are included in communication as a social phenomenon, and social phenomena (processes), also reflected in the word, are included in cognition and experience as a personal phenomenon. In this sense, every word for a person is **simultaneously** a group phenomenon (an instrument of communication and interaction), and an individual one (an instrument of organizing one's own psyche); language in general is for a person not something extraneous because it's social, but on the contrary it is his/her own precisely because it is the language of that society (group, collective) within which a person lives and to which he/she belongs.

5.   Research Methods

The concept of the LC with such an explanatory power cannot exist in isolation, apart from the general theory of the LC. Such theory has not yet been worked out, but is vitally important (once again we should emphasize) for the studies of the LC were not separate studies of certain aspects of it and would serve as a means of generalizing and summarizing knowledge of the language as the property of man and as the property of society (which is possible only with a unified theoretician-methodological basis), and the results of one study could be checked by the results of the other.

What is needed for such a general theory of the LC?

1. Theory of language as an individual phenomenon, as a group one and as an abstract scientific system;
2. Universal methods of describing any aspects and forms of existence of an object;
3. Principles from which the phenomenological properties of the object and the methodological characteristics of the theory are deduced.

Here below these provisions are considered in more details.

The theory of language that is needed exists already. This is the concept of L.V. Shcherba, considering all the varieties of language as an expression of its three aspects (Shcherba, 2004), to should be added the fourth aspect – the linguistic organization of the individual, the mental lexicon (Zalevskaya, 2005). Of course, such a theory of language can exist in another form, but its key property must be the ability to combine the language as a social and as an individual phenomenon, considering that any existence of language is dynamic. The theory of language suitable for the theory of the LC must, therefore, connect the two dynamics of the language-the enternal (intrapsychic) and the external (interpsychic), as well as their generalizations in theoretical abstractions. It should be a theory of language capable of deriving the general laws of the movement of language as a form of individual consciousness from observable facts of the use of language that are obtained not from one person but from a certain group of people. And if such trends fixed in theory are common (not just identical, but essential) for a group of people then they are related to the characteristics of the group considered in theory (they are social), and as long as these trends appear regularly in empirical material, they are individual (there are potentially all representatives of the group having appropriate property in one or another form). The language in its entirety appears in this case not as a supra-individual system of signs and not as a set of associations in a specific individual consciousness, but as a personal-social **continuum** of various phenomena. At the same time, in theory, it should be just theoretical generalizations, abstractions, theoretical models and schemes of real phenomena and processes, and not specific phenomena of individual consciousnesses of people from a given group. In the theory postulates should reflect in a general way the trends of interaction of external and internal factors and not their particular manifestations in the consciousness of specific individuals. Any anthropomorphism must be eliminated from the concepts of the theory of language, as well as the theory of the LC: they must be connected with human consciousness not directly, but as general ones, i.e. regularities abstracted and generalized by scientific knowledge which in their particular expression can manifest themselves in varying degrees and form in the speech activity of person and in the ordering of his/her mental lexicon.

Universal methods of describing an object imply, first, the simultaneous coverage of the external (group) and internal (personal) features in the empirical material and the corresponding methods of its processing; second, the unit of analysis capable of abstracting from the empirical material the connection between the internal and external aspect of linguistic phenomena. The unit of analysis of the LC must preserve, for further generalization, the connection between the external and the internal, i.e. representations in a word of the conscious image and interpersonal (group, social) process into which the given image through the given word is involved. Regardless of the form of the terminological name (concept, gestalt, etc.), every image of consciousness associated with a word has a linguistic aspect, an object aspect, an emotional aspect, a personal aspect and a bodily aspect. As a method of generalization, the unit of analysis of the LC should allow to identify through these words all these aspects of the consciousness images and

their dynamic connections. The unit of analysis should in this case be understood not as some immanent characteristics of empirical material subject to registration, but as a method for revealing its internal trends and links thanks to which the empirical facts are such as they are under different conditions.

We can name four basic principles of the theory from which the phenomenological properties of the object and the methodological characteristics of the theory are derived. The first one is that the reflection of a world in the mind of a person is active and biased. Consequently, in the language as a special (but not unique!) form of the existence of consciousness the emotional component of linguistic signs is essential. The affective experience of the world (not only perceptions but also purposeful and motivated acts changing the world and not only reacting to it) is ontologically inherent in the linguistic sign and is not some "gain" to the meaning, which may not be taken into account. This entails that the empirical material, in one form or another, will reveal an emotionally appraising attitude to the world, fixed and expressed through language, and it is also fixed in the positions and concepts of the theory. Each word contains an emotional-evaluative, personal component; nevertheless in some cases emotional experience can be neutral or implicit and not manifested in the framework of an experiment. In this respect, one should not speak about the language **and** the consciousness or about the language **in** the consciousness, but about the language **as** the consciousness. The second principle: the external is refracted through the internal (in a broader epistemological context see this in (Rubinstein 2012). Any changing the external (group) factors of language as a person's property refracts in an emotionally appraising attitude and causes a change in internal factors, the regularities of which are reflected in the empirical material and generalized by theory. No external change (that is, encompassing the whole group of individuals) itself causes significant changes in the mental lexicons of people, but only if it is experienced to some extent as personally significant, which also can find a different degree of expression in a specific experimental material. The third principle is related to the statistical, probabilistic nature of the regular relationships that are fixed in the theory between external and internal factors of the language. In this case, one does not ask, for instance: "What word in a particular mental lexicon has an emotional-evaluative coloring?" But one asks: "Which words **potentially** have such an emotional-evaluative coloring depending on certain characteristics of a group of people?" It is impossible to predict behavior or the properties of a word, it is only possible to predict the **probability** that it will behave in a certain way (not always strictly defined). The probabilistic approach to explaining the laws of language as the person's property does not tell us about the characteristics of a particular word in the consciousness of a particular person. But it tells us about a greater or lesser probability of discovering certain characteristics of a given word, and the result is not derived from one, but from many observations. Understanding of what properties a word has (for example, giving such and such types of reactions in an associative experiment) allows us to say with what probability this word will manifest in speech activity the peculiarities of its meaning revealed through these types of reactions. Consequently, the study material can be obtained only from a group of people (a set of repeated "measurements"), one or several characteristics of which are taken into account and the other ones are disregarded. The fourth principle is that the method of cognition **affects** its final results. The properties of an object are given to the subject not directly, but in the act of cognition, and the methods and means of observation and generalization of results are not part of the object of cognition and cannot be included in the result of cognition. However, they enter the summary knowledge in a general and indirect way, namely, as features of knowledge about the object

itself. The nature of the methods of cognition is crystallized and generalized by theory in the nature of knowledge about the object itself, in the specific properties attributed to the object (but not all of them). The methods of cognition are manifested as characteristics of the object. This makes it necessary to apply a set of methods to the LC, to re-check the results obtained, and to subject the same material to a multifaceted analysis.

The above principles can be briefly expressed as follows: activity and biased character of consciousness, the external is refracted through the internal, probabilistic nature of knowledge of the properties of the object, the involvement of the subject and the method of cognition in its final result.

The works that do not implement these principles are not devoted to the LC in its interpretation given in this article. They relate to traditional semantics, to linguistic culturology, linguistic personology, and so on. See, for instance: (Malevinsky, 2006; Prokofiev, 2008; Stefansky, 2009; Shamanova, 2009). Although these works formally study the LC (it is interesting that they are methodologically based on the traditional semantics, for example, in the understanding of it by the Moscow semantic school).

6. Findings

The above list of principles is open, the development of a general theory of the LC will force to add to them some others and clarify the available ones.

What are the main theses of a theory of the LC? They are as follows.

If in the mental lexicon there is a word that:

- has the meaning (in Vygotskian sense),
- has a connection with the meaning of the subject and / or situation,
- expresses an active and emotional experience of reality by a person,
- helps a person more effectively carry out activities (cognition and communication) in a changing world,

so this word:

- o is necessarily connected with other words by heterogeneous links,
- o necessarily changes links with other words and other phenomena of consciousness, necessarily moves in consciousness under the influence of internal and external factors,
- o necessarily contributes other phenomena of consciousness (memory, thinking, imagination, etc.) in the cognition of the world, communication and organization of human behavior.

It seems necessary to clarify the expressed statements and illustrate them with examples.

In the first statement, it is most important that such connections of words and the images behind them are heterogeneous. Empiric material (in particular in the associative experiment) reveals all aspects of the image or some of them, but never just one. Here are some translated examples from our free associative experiments with Russian speakers. DOCTOR – linguistic aspect: *medic*, *stunt* (there's a rhyme in Russian words); object aspect: *hospital*, *white robe*, *treats*, *syringe*; emotional aspect: *afraid of*, *half-educated*, *lifesaver*; bodily aspect: *smell*, *pain*. Another example: ARMY – linguistic aspect: *fleet*, *army*, object matter: *form*, *soldier*, *war*, emotional aspect: *evil*, *expelling*, *marasmus*. We are distracted from the

fact that aspects of the image in different cases are expressed with varying degrees and sometimes difficult to distinguish; it is important that the presence of only one aspect of the image in associations is possible only in special cases. Thus, when the presented stimuli are unknown for the participants the reactions (if any) manifest more often just one aspect of the image – the linguistic one. For example: CONGRUENCE – *congress*, *kangaroo*, TENSOR – *censor*, *tenor*, GLIAL – genius (in Russian these words are phonetically similar). Not numerous and of the same type associations with the stimulus suggest that the image behind the given word (stimulus) is not completely formed, it does not have an emotional "weight" and is not involved in cognition and communication.

The second statement says that potentially every act of facing the object (and the world at the large scale) or of actions with it changes the internal structure of the image of the object as well as the person's attitude to this object, and this change can be revealed through the corresponding word. The trends of such movement should be clarified and generalized in theory. However, like any movement, it is gradual and it's almost impossible to distinguish clearly one "stage" of such movement from another. This requires a special organization of experiments based on a different kind of comparison which will allow more pronounced manifestations of the changes in the connections within the image and between different images of consciousness. If the participants of an associative experiment don't know words such as VIVISECTION or OCCLUSION (in Russian one word designation of occluded cyclone), then the most frequent reaction will be a zero one or reaction in form (*section*, *wikipedia* and *illusion*, *occasion*). But if you first acquaint them with these words by means of small texts, then the reactions become diverse and reflect not only the information of these texts (VIVISECTION – *sin*, *autopsy*, *to cross*, OCCLUSION – *hurricane*, *plaid*, *obstruction*), but also an emotionally appraising experience (VIVISECTION – *animal abuse*, *pity*, *cruelty to animals*). A variety of connections between images of consciousness and within one image can explain the differentiation of associations into the terms of linguistics which reveals in the results of an experiment conducted in a group of first-year and fourth-year students of linguistics.

The third statement is due to the systemic structure of consciousness and psyche and means that there is something that integrates the activity of various phenomena of consciousness, and this something is personality. The personality acting, feeling and experiencing the world gives birth to motive and purpose of cognition, of communication and, consequently, of the comprehension of the world (making it senseful) and of oneself in the world which are fixed in signs as psychic instruments of the organization of man's interaction with the world. This statement takes the theory of the LC beyond its borders, allowing us to link the LC researches with researches in psychology, psychosemantics, pedagogy, linguistic culturology, cognitive science, and so on.

One should realize that these statements are not an unshakable dogma and can be corrected under the influence of new experimental data. If such data refutes at least one of these provisions, the whole theory should be discarded as an incorrectly reflection of language reality.

All of this makes it necessary to formulate a set of challenges facing the general theory of the LC:

1. by the way external and internal links of the given word appear in the experiment – to identify and explain the connections of words belonging to different semantic groups with respect to the corresponding groups of people, and also to reveal patterns of changes in these links when external and internal factors change;

2. by the character of links of a given word with others – to reveal its significance, the nature of its connections with the object and situation, the degree and nature of the person-emotional experience expressed by it;

3. by the way the links of a word change due to external and internal factors – to reveal the changes in its meaning, the changes in its links with the appropriate object and situation, the changes in the degree and nature of the personal and emotional experience expressed by this word;

4. to check (not only to confirm!) the data of the LC theory with data from other sciences and directions, primarily psychology.

As well as the complex of the methodological principles formulated above the complex of problems of the general theory of the LC is also open for subsequent amendments depending on new empirical data. If all the connections of words and their changes are not regularly manifested in empiricism, this will mean a refutation of the theory and the need to abandon it.

7. Conclusion

All that has been makes it possible to draw conclusions of a theoretical and methodological nature.

The expressed methodological prerequisites necessary for the theory of the LC and its general statements can force one to rethink some (or even many) of the usual concepts, transforming them from absolute to relative ones. Thus, the very concept of "linguistic consciousness" appears precisely as a relative one: there is no such thing as "linguistic consciousness in general", it must be talked about only with respect to a certain group of speakers of the given language. In addition, the LC as a scientific concept being an abstraction does not possess any ontology at all, except for the purely scientific one, that which it is endowed in the framework of the science of language. The LC is unknowable directly and sensually, it cannot be found in the linguistic material itself; the LC is certain interdependencies of different characteristics of empirical material, which are regularly displayed in it and abstracted from it by theory.

Another important conclusion is that the carrier of linguistic changes is not the word itself, but the internal and external processes into which it is involved. The meaning of a word is determined by them and not by the information that it carries from person to person. The concept "meaning" cannot be reduced to information contained in the sign. The semantic properties of a word are not immanent to itself, nor to the psychic properties of speakers; they are determined by the nature of the interaction of the internal and the external – by the commonality of the experience of people and by the common understanding of the given word by these people, and this community is not absolute, but relative. Individual sense and meaning are always inherent in the word, the difference between them is not of a fundamental nature (the boundary between them is blurred) and is due to the peculiarities of the continuum of linguistic phenomena. Changes in words and, in general, language are described not through concepts related to the characteristics of the words themselves, but through concepts related to the characteristics of processes in which words are involved.

Characteristics of the language as the person's property fixed in the concept of the LC are not laid down in words, they arise, are recreated in every act of using the language in space and in the time of interaction between a word, an object, an emotion (more precisely: a human word, a human object and a

human emotion). These characteristics are not in the person's individual consciousness, but between his/her affectively experiencing personality and his/her activity, on the one hand, and the world to which such activity and experience are directed, on the other hand. Briefly: the characteristics of the language fixed in the LC are not located in the person's mind, but arise **between the person and the world interacting with each other**.

Changes in the connections within the images of consciousness and changes in their reflection in empirical material are unique and systemic. On the one hand, the change in external (and therefore internal) factors of the word's life always takes place systematically, the whole system of connections between the components of the image changes. On the other hand, such changes are unique for each word, any word reflects the components of the image of consciousness in its own way. Hence: the essential regularities of changing the links of one word in the mental lexicons of a group of people depending on external and internal factors and the attitude of individuals to these factors may not find their expression or find only an indirect expression in another word, however close in meanings they are, or in another group of people.

There's no definition of the LC itself above. This is done deliberately because we believe that the LC researches should not proceed from some postulated general definition worked out by theorizing, but **come** to such definition by analyzing specific linguistic facts with the possibility of its subsequent revision due to new facts. The empirical material should be considered in such a way that the LC appears as a kind of derivative of external and internal factors affecting the meaning and sense of words. Then in the LC as a concept of the theory, how internal (emotions, values, etc.) and external (age, profession, etc.) conditions of functioning of language as a person's property will be related to the movement of the language, to the meaning and sense of a word and its connections with other words.

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