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**THE DESTINY OF LANGUAGE AS A MEDIUM TO THE
HISTORY OF COMMUNICATION**

Zagidullina Marina (a)*

*Corresponding author

(a) Professor of Journalism and Mass Communication Department, Chelyabinsk State University,
Br. Kashirinykh, 129, Chelyabinsk, Russia, 454001, marta@csu.ru, 8(351)7997029

Abstract

This research is relative to the philosophy of language. The author considers the concepts of “language fatigue” and “fatigue from language” as interrelated processes that confirm Derrida’s thesis about “language inflation” and its textual forms. The main method of the research is “archaeology of knowledge” as proposed by M. Foucault. Relying on the ideas of F. de Saussure, M. McLuhan and V. V. Kolesov we can develop a concept of the impending transformation of the basic medium of communication - language itself. The author of the article suggests paying attention to two possible visions of this transformation: on the one hand, language as a form of everyday communication is already undergoing a powerful pressure from symbolic-figurative forms of communication, and on the other there is the prospect of turning language into an instrument of the art of literature and the ultimate flowering of language capacity in forms of high art (fiction, poetry). These historical perspectives clarify the actual tasks of linguistics as a scientific discipline: firstly, to monitor modern communication with the purpose of timely revealing the symbolic-figurative forms of information exchange; secondly, to study the state of language in forms of verbal art that can become the only repository of national languages.

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1. Introduction

The problem of today's communication and communicative competence is becoming more urgent (Selyutin & Panova 2017), as the information and communication field itself undergoes rapid changes (Mediatized World 2014; van Dijck & Poell, 2013). In the present article, it is proposed to consider the prospects of linguistics through the prism of the macro-historical approach, which makes it possible to emphasize the temporality and transience of not only single linguistic processes, but also of the language itself (in its present form with a written-alphabetic basis) as such. Linguists' inattention to language finiteness (in its present state) as the basic medium during a very long period of human development makes it difficult to respond adequately to the challenges of the present and future times. It assumes a limited viewpoint on language processes and communication phenomena, and often predetermines an appraisal attitude towards language taken outside the historical and cultural context, or an uncritical attitude towards the theories and beliefs of researchers considering the written and printed period of language development as being finite (that is, as the highest achievement of information and communication technologies). Thus, the purpose of this article is to accumulate arguments in defense of the concept of basic medium temporality and to formulate the main consequences of adopting these arguments for the development of linguistics as a scientific discipline. The object of consideration in this case is scientific research, related to the panoramic examination of language as a basic medium and embodied in the works of the scientists – philosophers, linguists, sociologists, and the subject is the arguments in defense of the concept of language temporary nature in the form in which it exists today. To achieve the goal it is supposed to solve there are two main tasks: to bring the list of arguments and to show the practical significance of actualizing such an approach to language in linguistic studies as a basic medium in human communication.

2. Problem Statement

The problem considered in the article is formulated in line with the “theory of the medium” (Toronto school of communication science). If the problem of technical equipment of communication was important for the Canadian researchers M. McLuhan, W. Ong and H. Innis, who distinguished periods of verballity, handwritten, printed and electric, in this article it is proposed by the author to call into question the eternity and steadfastness of language per se as the basic medium of communication (McLuhan 2003). Language as the main form of communication in human society was generally considered as unshakable and being the only way to consolidate culture and transfer it from generation to generation. However, the current state of communication weakens this thesis.

3. Research Questions

The main questions of the article are formulated as follows:

Q1. Within the archaeology of knowledge: could Humanity develop a mode of communication, different from the oral and written verbal exchanges?

Q2. Within the framework of linguistics: how does language inflation manifest itself in contemporary culture?

Q3. In the context of communicative studies: can everyday communication move to other, new non-textual and non-linguistic forms of information exchange and information storage?

3.1. The randomness of choosing a speech-language form of communication as a basic medium

The first question goes back to the thesis of F. de Saussure about the “randomness” of speech (Saussure 1999). The research question allows the author to study the “weak” aspects of the language as the main communication tool. The main thesis in considering this issue is the discrepancy of linguistic forms with mental and emotional states, as well as the “imperfection” of written fixations of thoughts and feelings.

3.2. Inflation of language considered as a “convulsive proliferation of libraries”

The second question goes back to the observations of J. Derrida on the redundancy of text matter in the society of printed-electrical forms of communication (Derrida 2000). Language inflation is considered not only in the physically and material aspect, i.e. quantitative accumulation of “paper” information, but also after B. Latour (Latour 2006) as a result of the “linguistic turn” in science, as well as the spread of technologies that facilitate written forms of exchange and devalue the former regulatory oppositions between oral and written, business and spoken, etc.

3.3. Language elimination in daily business communication and concentration of language in the forms of verbal art

This third question allows us to update F. Kittler’s thesis about the importance of technical equipment of communication: communication takes-on forms that are “prescribed” technically, and do not predetermine them (Kittler 1999). A fundamentally different version of “writing” in digitized forms of communication is significant, when not only verbal but also visual and auditive information is transmitted with the help of a symbolic conditional text that is not read by a person (Bryant 2014; Nöth 2015; Nolin & Olson 2016; Psychophysiological 2016; Pandey 2016 et al.). Therefore, a large place in the communication is occupied by emo-written forms (from emoticons to use of caps lock – see: (Bucci, Maskit & Murphy 2016; Yus 2018) and all special issue of Russian Linguistic Journal devoted to emo-discourse, 2018, no. 22-1). At the same time, modern poetry and fiction demonstrate the attitude toward language as an infinitely rich matter, self-sufficient in its aesthetic function.

4. Purpose of the Study

This study aims to identify the prospects for an interdisciplinary approach to the symptoms of language inflation, the transition to symbolic-figurative communication in everyday practices, and the “liberation” of language as an instrument of verbal art. The goal is achieved through an interdisciplinary approach: language philosophy allows to identify the main symptoms of “language fatigue” and “fatigue from language,” communicative studies open the prospect of a system analysis of non-textual and non-

linguistic forms of communication, and linguistics predetermines the possibilities of analysing language and texts in the aspect of their aestheticizing.

5. Research Methods

The main research method is the archaeology of knowledge (language) proposed by M. Foucault (Foucault, 1996; see also other works of Foucault). Under the “archaeology of knowledge” M. Foucault actually understood the method of deconstruction, i.e. careful reading, meticulous study, search for answers to questions that no one had ever asked before. Still, the task of the archaeology of ideas, according to M. Foucault, is the transcription of the idea, its articulation without any interpretations. If M. Bakhtin believed that the genre lives on the borders, M. Foucault believed that the task of the archaeologist of knowledge is to find the nucleus, the unwieldy heavy core of discourse the way it is in order to indifferently fix the essence of discourse as a “frozen fragment” of knowledge. With this approach, according to M. Foucault, there reveals the prospect of an “autopsy” of important meanings hidden in the essence of discourse – in its meta-language character (Foucault, 1996, p. 168).

In this sense, the “archaeology of linguistic knowledge” helps to discover the basic belief in the eternity of the language (both in the past and in the future) in axiomatically ingrained notions of linguistics. However, referring to the researches of the macro-historical level, we find a different point of view. While evolving, language increasingly distances itself from those forms that predetermined its development earlier. In this article, our task is to see how the macro-historical approach contributes to the crystallization of this idea.

6. Findings

The main findings are presented as answers to three research questions.

6.1. The randomness of the civilizational choice of language and speech as a basic medium

Responding to Q1, we note that the founder of linguistics as a science, Ferdinand de Saussure, provides an important reflection on the coincidence that it was the organs of speech that were used by people as a tool for their communication activity (Saussure 1999, p. 18). Saussure’s French terminology *langage* is translated in Russian precisely as “speech activity”, although it would be more correct to say “linguaging” – the constant implementation of language in social practices; at the same time, the notion of “discourse” (F. de Saussure’s “oratorical speech”), which has become a part of the scientific usage, roughly means the same thing – a combination of phenomena of a very different kinds, predetermining, provoking, organizing a concrete style, a means of verbal communication. Defining the only object of linguistics that other sciences can not “claim”, F. de Saussure writes that language is the basis for “*langage*”, speech activity, the basis that we can describe and characterize, which – with all its sociality – still has the features that require a special scientific view (namely linguistic). And here F. de Saussure notes that it is a natural ability for a person “to create the language”. By language in this sense he understands “a system of differentiated signs corresponding to differentiated concepts” (Saussure 1999, p. 18). This definition perfectly suits any artificial language, and even more – programming languages. The depth of F. de

Saussure's thought is visible from the point of view of "linguistic archaeology" – it is natural only to be able to build the systems of signs, and not just from the elements of sounds articulated by the organs of speech, or the letters assigned to these sounds.

The thesis about the accidental fixation of the voice and organs of speech as instruments of communication and the production of linguistic phenomena seems especially productive when referring to the work of J. Derrida "On Grammatology". Here, Derrida makes the reader rediscover not only F. de Saussure (especially dwelling on his doubts and contradictions), but also C. Levi-Strauss, consistently moving towards the antinomy of the "natural" and "violent" in J.-J. Rousseau and showing the possible meaning of contradictions of his treatise "The experience of the languages origin". The theme of the "violence of the letter" (over the living natural speech) seen as a proof of the imminent "death of speech" in its collision with the letter was repeatedly interpreted by admirers and detractors of the French thinker, but we will point to the very principle that underlies the method of J. Derrida to reveal meanings, and this is precisely the macro-historical approach. Looking back to the horizon (the "East") of mankind, Derrida also looks far ahead, to the "West", where the contours of the "arising world" appear more and more clearly, which not only plots the ruin of books (Derrida proclaims its death at the very beginning of his research), but also that of the sign, the speech, the writing as such (Derrida 2000, p. 118). Without clarifying or precisising these insights, Derrida invites the reader to look into the thoughts of his predecessors "deconstructively", revealing the concealed in them and, on the contrary, pointing to the new meanings of what seemed to be clear and unambiguous. But we, in turn, think that Derrida's idea opens the possibility of a broad macro-historical interpretation of the language as a "basic medium": "...language itself is menaced in its very life, helpless, adrift in the threat of limitlessness, brought back to its own finitude at the very moment when its limits seem to disappear, when it ceases to be self-assured, contained, and guaranteed by the infinite signified which seemed to exceed it" (Derrida 2000, p. 120). This thought can be perceived as a metaphor for the "withering" of the brightness of a language, its impoverishment, etc. Still, it is more logical to see here a direct meaning: "...inflation of the sign "language" is the inflation of the sign itself, absolute inflation, inflation itself." (ibid.).

Although in a completely different way, McLuhan comes to similar ideas in "Understanding Media" (McLuhan 2003). From his point of view (shared by other representatives of the Canadian school of communication science), language communication has gone through four stages of its mediality: oral, written, printed, and electric (radio, TV). Each of these epochs changed the world, while cancelling the achievements and advantages of the man of the previous era. This cancellation presumably predetermines an important idea about the instability of the "basic medium" (if the word is oral, then it is one story, and if it is electrical one, the story is fundamentally different.) It is interesting that the occurrence of writing was a genuine breakdown of the oral "habitus", the usual ways of transferring and storing everything important and meaningful – it was then possible to delegate the work of memory to the page and the text, and therefore the memory underwent a powerful reconfiguration (see debates around the shift in communication field: Fortunati 2017; O'Sullivan, Fortunati, Taipale, Barnhurst 2017; Shoemaker & Reese 2014; The crisis of journalism 2016 et al.).

The world also changed powerfully in the transition to book culture, and then to the "inflation" of this culture (Derrida writes about it as the "convulsive proliferation of libraries"; here he sees the crisis and

the closeness of the decline of book culture in general, although the book “On Grammatology” is written in 1967). McLuhan’s attempt to show that the attitude to “electric media” as a period of cultural decline is nothing more than a limited vision of the world from short sighted positions.

Yet, the macro-historical approach teaches one more thing: the need to go “to the end” to “East” and “West” using Derrida’s metaphor, that is, to extend the logic of examining the language in both sides of the “arrow of time”.

Thus, the argument for “language inflation” opens an argument about its (language) finiteness.

6.2. Inflation of the language: language fatigue and fatigue from language

Q2 implies an appeal to the macro-historical approach that allowing one to look at the “crisis of linguistic turn” not just as a “normal” phenomenon of fashion that permeates all human practices, not excluding science (and, accordingly, sensitive to everything “stagnant” as boring and “old-fashioned”), but as a logical evolutionary phenomenon, signaling the abandonment of language by mankind in its articulatory-phoneme-alphabetic form. First of all, Saussure’s thesis on the randomness of the sign, often discussed in linguistics, overshadowed his thesis about the randomness of language itself as a “differentiated system of differentiated signs”. “Promoting” these ideas, J. Derrida speaks of distinctiveness, articulation, difference and differance in the language as a powerful step towards – in fact – the ruin of language. Language becomes an object described through the language; if this paradox occupies philosophers almost like an insoluble nonsense, then from a macro-historical point of view, this is precisely the argument in favor of the “decline” of language as such. The subject of articulation, consonants, transcriptions, pronunciation (Derrida 2000) is an excuse to point out the obvious opposition of the “natural” (singing) and the artificial (speech), that is, to see the inventiveness, the “madness” in the exchange of words. But then the current idea of the “naturalness of language” is being questioned, and the thoughts of N. Chomsky about the “embeddedness” and “integratedness” of a language capacity in a human (based on recursion) do not seem absolute (why should the recursive necessarily be applied to language and language capacity?). See the recent debates: Corballis 2017; Everaert et al. 2017; Jablonka 2017; also Longa 2013; Nefedova, Remke 2014 et al.).

We get then the concept of a very long cultural practice (language itself), which began in ancient times and is nearing its demise. It is not a matter of replacing a pen with a printing press or a book with the Internet. The pen and the book can be identified as distinctive marks of the maturity and extinction of language when “read” by a linguistic archeologist both in F. de Saussure’s reflection on the essence of language as a conditional education, and in the reflections of J. Derrida on the “pre-writing” of speech, on the totality of writing as a predestination, and, for example, in B. Latour’s argument about the limited world, driven into the framework of the “text format” (Latour 2006, p. 129). It is obvious that for Latour the linguistic turn seems to be some sort of “whim” of researchers who have lost the essence of being – the process of unstoppable communication between the actors, which alone constitutes the reality. But his words also hide the thesis of “fatigue from language”.

Behind this thesis, in turn, is the thesis of the fatigue of language itself – its ultimate accumulation, preparing for a transition to a new state. This thesis requires a more detailed explanation. In the framework of this article, we only note that the powerful development of mankind's linguistic culture can now be

considered through the prism of such an important element of communication as understanding: has understanding become easier, faster, deeper and more adequate than before? It is hardly possible to measure the index of “understanding”, but it still lies behind the Logos, hiding “between the lines”, in overtones, in gestures, glances, and meanings that words were not intended to convey. “Epikhodov comes” (Chekhov’s “Cherry Orchard”) in Ranevskaya’s words, and then, in Anya’s – this statement could mean anything, but it’s not at all certain that he really comes. In “Anna Karenina”, Levin and Kitty converse by the first letters of phrases, but what would these letters mean if it was not for their mutual attraction? Platon Karataev in “War and Peace” fails to repeat the phrase just quoted at the request of Pierre, he is at loss – what to do? Repeat? Say a separate phrase? Is there a separate drop in the stream of the river? “Sometimes Pierre, struck by the meaning of his words, would ask him to repeat them, but Platon could never recall what he had said a moment before, just as he never could repeat to Pierre the words of his favorite song: native and birch tree and my heart is sick occurred in it, but when spoken and not sung, no meaning could be got out of it. He did not, and could not, understand the meaning of words apart from their context. Every word and action of his was the manifestation of an activity unknown to him, which was his life. But his life, as he regarded it, had no meaning as a separate thing. It had meaning only as part of a whole of which he was always conscious. His words and actions flowed from him as evenly, inevitably, and spontaneously as fragrance exhales from a flower. He could not understand the value or significance of any word or deed taken separately” (Tolstoy 1940, p. 50–51). This “anti-linguistic” passage, undoubtedly, targets the concept of J. J. Rousseau’s natural man; but in the same way it helps to understand the synthesis of the “wave-” and the “corpuscular-” nature of language, likewise to the theory of light. See also about an emancipation of text: Bredehoft 2014.

6.3. The thinning matter of language and the tasks of linguistics

Q3 can be formulated in the following way: what is to be done by linguistics exploring the thinning matter of language?

If the thesis of ‘language fatigue’ is correct, it remains to be assumed that language as a way of conveying thoughts with the help of words has fulfilled its function and led humanity to a high level of development of science and technology, when in practice there is an opportunity to change the basic medium – the language itself. The question of how this will happen is a topic of separate “futures” (in the sense of the concept used by H.-U. Gumbrecht (2006), but one can name several achievements of modern technology like chips implantation, on the one hand, and artificial intelligence development, on the other. The old opposition of “robots” and “humans” is not very relevant, because, in fact, the human body itself becomes a “platform” for the introduction of technology (see, for example: The Spectacle 2.0 2017). And if human thought, which up to now cannot adequately find itself in the word (according to Tyutchev, “the thought spoken is a lie”), can be incarnated, let’s suppose, by a special electrical impulse that is readable/accessible to another consciousness (also equipped with the appropriate technical equipment), why then would language be needed? After all, the essence of the “basic medium” is the transmission of thoughts, feelings, and fantasy. If the mass practice of communication is due to become an instant and precise exchange of thoughts (one can imagine this) and not just short text messages, then language will survive the period of archiving and will transit to the ‘art’ world. Just as there is art of music and singing,

where the instrument is a note or a melody, language will be the object of careful and focused attention, of special (elitist) study and mastering, it will be an instrument of creative work.

V. Kolesov writes in a very subtle manner of this in his new book, although it may seem that he uses the traditional and familiar phrases: “Russian language is eternal, as every great language of human civilization is eternal”, and also: “Quite recently we did not have a literary language in a national form (a language of intellectual activity), but it is also true that in due course it will again disappear, if in the process of the development of culture it will again be necessary to switch to communication in symbolic forms (it’s already obvious process)” (Kolesov, 2017). That is, Russian language will remain as a part of the national identity, as a tradition, and at the same time as an instrument of creativity and art, but not as a language of intellectual activity in its pragmatic-communicative meaning.

By unfolding “obvious process” in more details, we can present a “program” of linguistic studies: if in the future language moves into the sphere of optional communication or creative practice, it makes sense to study its transformation during the transition stage, to capture, record, and describe the different directions of this “transit” process, to follow the phenomena that reflect this “exodus” from the verbal-articulatory language to symbolic (and any other, even unpredictable) forms of communication. In modern communicative reality the marginal becomes the central: communication is in the form of an exchange of music files, gifs, memes; watching the TV series together becomes a family memory; the story about the dinner is built as a series of photographs, etc. All these are objects of communication. However, it is linguistics that can catch the linguistic nature in thousands of contemporary phenomena of communication, namely, how, in what way and at what point these things will develop together and displace the language to the periphery of civilization.

7. Conclusion

Abstracts of the “language of fatigue” and “fatigue from language” help to re-evaluate modern communication: we are not facing a “drop”, “degradation” and “dullness” of our language capacity, but its rebirth, the preparation for an actual change of the basic medium (if under the medium we understand an even deeper concept than that of McLuhan, namely, language as a medium between the inner consciousness and the external form of its explication). And then any innovative technologies, opening up prospects for data exchange, theory and – most importantly – the visualization practice, emotional syntax of short text messages and the pursuit of a fashionable image, popular phenomena of the Internet and new trends in music, modern poetry and the state of modern obscene communication in conditions of anon-taboo writing should fall in the zone of interest of linguistics.

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