

The Linguistic Worldview: Psycholinguistic and Cognitively Informed Perspectives

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Abstract: This article explores the concept of the linguistic worldview from a psycholinguistic and linguocultural perspective, tracing its theoretical and historical roots from Wilhelm von Humboldt to contemporary research. It examines the role of language as a mechanism for perceiving, conceptualizing, and actively shaping reality, highlighting the interplay between language, thought, and culture. The study also emphasizes the significance of meanings as core components of consciousness and presents methodological approaches, including free associative experiments, for modeling linguistic consciousness. The paper demonstrates how integrating theoretical and experimental conditions enables a systematic and empirically grounded investigation of the worldview of a particular linguocultural community.

Keywords: Linguistic worldview; linguistic consciousness; culture and thought; psycholinguistics; meanings; free associative experiment; cognitive linguistics; linguocultural approach; language and reality.

Introduction: In recent years, the growing interest in the issue of the linguistic worldview in linguistics has been explained primarily in connection with the semantically and culturally grounded studies of Anna Wierzbicka. However, in our view, a full understanding of the scholarly significance of this concept requires a deeper historical analysis of its theoretical foundations. In this respect, it should be emphasized that the formation of the concept of the linguistic worldview can be traced back to a much earlier period, finding clear expression in the scientific ideas of Wilhelm von Humboldt. Humboldt interprets language not merely as a means of communication, but as a fundamental cognitive mechanism that structures human processes of perceiving, comprehending, and interpreting reality. Within his approach, differences between languages are not limited to the level of nominative units; rather, they are manifested in distinctive models of representing and conceptualizing the world.

In our view, it is precisely this aspect that determines the continuing relevance of Wilhelm von Humboldt's ideas for contemporary cognitive and linguocultural

research. As noted by L. P. Lobanova, although the concept of the linguistic worldview was first formed as an integrated scholarly conception in Humboldt's works, its philosophical foundations can be traced back to ancient traditions of thought. This circumstance demonstrates both the universality and the historical continuity of the relationship between language and thought. Wilhelm von Humboldt's well-known idea that "languages are not different names for the same thing, but rather different visions of it" clearly illustrates, in our view, that language is not a passive medium for reflecting reality, but an active force that shapes and reinterprets it. Therefore, the study of the linguistic worldview should be regarded as an important scholarly field that goes beyond the mere description of linguistic units, as it enables the identification of the worldview, value system, and cognitive priorities of a particular linguocultural community.

At the same time, the identification of key concepts within the linguistic worldview requires particular attention to the factor of subjectivity. As criticized by A. A. Leontiev, in some studies "linguistic intuition" and

individual intuitive judgments are not sufficiently constrained by scientific criteria and consequently become the primary instruments of analysis. In our view, although an intuitive approach may be useful to a certain extent in capturing subtle aspects of linguistic phenomena, without being reinforced by a rigorous methodological framework and empirical evidence, it inevitably undermines the scholarly reliability of the conclusions drawn. Therefore, in line with Leontiev's position, we maintain that intuition in linguistics should be granted only a limited and clearly defined role, while primary emphasis should be placed on systematic analysis, comparative methods, and evidence-based scientific approaches.

To date, within the framework of national psycholinguistics, both theoretical and experimental foundations necessary for studying the linguistic worldview as an integrated system have been established. In particular, these include the following:

- the interpretation of culture as a system of consciousness, that is, viewing culture as a complex phenomenon embodied in individual and collective structures of consciousness;
- the interpretation of language as a means of reflecting sociocultural reality, from which it follows that the object of research should not be isolated linguistic units, but rather a system of meanings;
- the introduction of the concept of linguistic consciousness, which is close to the psychological notion of the image of the world and is interpreted as a system of object-related meanings, some of which may find external expression in verbal form;
- the application of the free associative experiment as a research method, where the speaker's prior verbal and non-verbal experience is understood as an "implicit context";
- the modeling of linguistic consciousness in the form of an associative-verbal network based on the results of large-scale associative experiments, that is, the construction of a weighted, partially connected directed graph;
- the use of the concept of significance/value as a key element structuring linguistic consciousness and its individual fragments (verbal meanings);
- the recognition of the distinction between the

core and the periphery within the structure of linguistic consciousness.

It may thus be concluded that it is precisely the integration of these theoretical and experimental conditions that enables a profound, systematic, and methodologically sound psycholinguistic investigation of the linguistic worldview.

Below, each of these issues will be examined in turn.

Culture as a System of Consciousness

Within psychological activity theory, consciousness is equated with the worldview. This worldview is open to the individual and integrally incorporates the person themselves, their actions, and their mental states. Such an approach makes it possible to interpret consciousness not as a static structure, but as a dynamic system that is continuously formed in the course of human activity. According to this theory, meanings constitute the most important components of consciousness, since it is precisely meanings that represent a processed, condensed, and idealized form of the objective world—its properties, connections, and relations—within linguistic material.

It should be emphasized that this perspective provides grounds for interpreting meanings not merely within the confines of semantic units, but as a complex cognitive-cultural mechanism that preserves, systematizes, and transmits socio-historical experience. Through meanings, the knowledge, values, and norms developed by society are internalized by the individual consciousness and transmitted from generation to generation. Consequently, meanings emerge as a key factor that governs not only human cognitive activity, but also practical behavior and social relations.

Language as a Reflection of Sociocultural Reality

In 1976, when analyzing word meaning, A. A. Leontiev interpreted it from a psycholinguistic perspective as the subjective content of a sign image. At the same time, Leontiev emphasized that although the meaning of a word may be identical across different individuals in terms of its reference to a particular object, it may nevertheless differ with respect to social reality (in terms of ideal content) as well as in terms of subjective content.

This idea was advanced in relation to the ontogenetic

development of the word. As Leontiev noted, even though the meaning of a word may appear semantically similar at different age stages, it can differ structurally. Moreover, the development of word meaning is intrinsically linked to the development of ideal signs through its subjective content; this process occurs as the individual progressively acquires and masters objective content in an increasingly refined manner.

From our analysis, this approach makes it possible to interpret language not merely as a communicative tool, but as a mechanism for the perception and conceptualization of culture. According to Leontiev, the principal factor that determines the cultural specificity of a society is the system of meanings—that is, the system that shapes the worldview and performs an orientational function in activity—rather than a system of words or speech reactions alone. This system is often composed not of words as such, but of object-related meanings; it constructs the image of the world and serves as a component that, over time, shapes the processes of speech production. At the same time, Leontiev emphasizes that a system of concepts exists only in linguistic form.

The Concept of “Linguistic Knowledge” from a Linguistic Perspective

By the term linguistic knowledge, we understand the component of individual consciousness that is mediated by language and operates with meanings of a social nature. This layer of consciousness becomes accessible to external observation through verbal means—in a broad sense, via individual lexical units, associative fields, or coherent texts. Such knowledge is formed within a specific cultural space and represents the product of social experience that is articulated and consolidated through language in the process of an individual’s socialization.

As emphasized by A. A. Leontiev, the term linguistic knowledge does not directly correspond to the object of study in traditional linguistics, which treats language as an autonomous and closed system. In Leontiev’s approach, language is not interpreted as an abstract system existing independently of human consciousness, but rather as a psychological phenomenon that emerges and functions within the process of activity. In particular, Leontiev’s well-known assertion reveals the essence of this issue: a person

“does not confront an isolated object, but the entire world of objects; they operate not within the bounds of a single meaning, but within a system of meanings.”

The Free Associative Experiment Method in the Study of Linguistic Consciousness

In psycholinguistic research, the associative experiment occupies a special place as one of the most important and effective methods for investigating linguistic consciousness. The concept of association (from Latin *associatio* — “connection,” “linking”) in psychology denotes the relationship between mental contents formed within an individual’s experience. In particular, a connection that arises between two or more mental contents (sensations, representations, thoughts, emotions, and others) is characterized by the property that the activation of one content leads to the actualization of another (Psychological Dictionary, 1996: 26).

Extensive empirical material accumulated in experimental psychology demonstrates that the processes involved in the formation of simple associations play a significant role in various aspects of human mental activity. Specifically, they are actively involved in memory processes, the transfer of knowledge, mediated and associative generalization, as well as in perception. Research findings have also revealed the presence of age-related changes within systems of verbal associations, which confirms that linguistic consciousness is a dynamic and continuously developing phenomenon.

CONCLUSION

The study of the linguistic worldview reveals the intricate relationship between language, thought, and culture. Language is not merely a communicative tool but an active cognitive mechanism that shapes and reinterprets reality. Meanings, as the core components of consciousness, mediate individual and collective experience, transmitting social knowledge, values, and norms across generations. Methodological approaches, such as free associative experiments, provide valuable tools for empirically modeling linguistic consciousness and understanding its dynamic nature. Integrating theoretical and experimental frameworks allows for a systematic and scientifically grounded investigation of the worldview of specific linguocultural communities, highlighting the

importance of a psycholinguistic and cognitively informed perspective in contemporary linguistic research.

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