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THE USE OF SOCIALLY SIGNIFICANT CONCEPTS BY NATIVE SPEAKERS OF THE TURCOMAN LANGUAGE (EXPERIMENTAL STUDY)

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Abstract

The article analyzes a fragment of the image of the world in the language consciousness of bilingual Turkmen living in Turkmenistan and speaking fluent Turcoman and Russian. The authors of the article performed a free associative experiment. The stimulus words for the experiment are Motherland, Russia, Migrant, Home, and Family. The choice of the stimulus words is explained by the fact that these concepts actualize the specifics of the mental code and are important cultural constants. The relevance of the research is due to the fact that it allows us to obtain data demonstrating the personal experience of an individual on the one hand, and the language social experience on the other. The associative experiment allows to model the structural and operational parameters of the meaning of a 'living' word. The structural method is based on the analysis of semantic connections between the stimulus word and associative reactions.

Keywords

Fragment of the world image – Free associative experiment – Bilingual – Migration linguistics

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Introduction

The wish of a person to find a more comfortable place of residence is any human natural aspiration. It leads to the fact that in the modern world there is an active and uncontrolled process of migration of citizens from countries with a low standard of living to countries with a higher standard of living. This process is caused by unemployment, lack of state support and social guarantees, violation of human rights, etc. Migration is also triggered by military conflicts, unfavorable climate, environmental problems, high crime rates, etc. Today, the problems of the relationship and mutual influence of migration processes and language are becoming very acute in the sphere of the humanities. Thus migration linguistics has been borne and is nowadays actively developing[1]. Its object is a comprehensive analysis of dynamic language processes, modeling of a complex language situation and migration discourse[2]. Linguistic globalization and the emerging sociolinguistic "dispersion" require new approaches to the study of basic concepts. Streams of people, knowledge, texts in the social space determine a change in the frontiers of linguistics. Modern researchers study the relationship between lexical meanings and social ideology, as well as the sociocultural understanding of identity[3].

The study of individuals or small groups of people represents special interest for researchers. In this respect migration linguistics can quite reasonably use the methods of psycholinguistics, the subject of which, in the opinion of A. A. Leontyev, is "the relationship of personality with the structure and functions of speech activity on the one hand, and language as the main element of the image of the human world on the other "[4]. Psycholinguistics is focused on the triad "language – man – consciousness" which corresponds to the characteristics of the anthropocentric paradigm. One of the most popular methods for identifying indicators of linguistic consciousness (individual and collective) in psycholinguistics is a free associative experiment. Associations obtained during such an experiment arise under the influence of the two factors: 1) certain characteristics of the stimulus word itself (linguistic factor) and 2) the influence of the subject's personality (pragmatic factor).

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[1] E. Gugenberger, Theorie und Empirie der Migrationslinguistik. Mit einer Studie zu den Galicieen und Galicierinnen in Argentien (Wien: Forschung und Wissenschaft, 2018); Th. Krefeld, Einführung in die Migrationslinguistik. Von der Germania italiana in die Romania multipla (Tübingen: Gunter Narr Verlag, 2004) y Th. Stehl, Sprachen in mobilisierten Kulturen: Aspekte der Migrationslinguistik (Potsdam: Universitätsverlag, 2011).

[2] S. V. Shustova; M. R. Zheltukhina; M. V. Druzhinina; E. O. Zubareva; E. V. Isaeva; V. M. Kosteva y A. S. Chernousova, Migration linguistics in the modern scientific paradigm: mediation practices: monograph (Perm: Perm state national research Institute, 2019); E. O. Zubareva; E. V. Isaeva; A. V. Itsenko; V. M. Kosteva; E. Yu. Moshanskaya; S. V. Shustova, Migration linguistics in the modern scientific paradigm. Collective monograph (Perm: Perm state national research Institute, 2019) y S. V. Shustova; E. O. Zubareva; N. V. Khorosheva; V. M. Kosteva; E. Yu. Moshanskaya; A. S. Kinder-Knecht y Jh. Köck, Migration linguistics in the modern scientific paradigm: discursive practices, translation, didactics: monograph (Perm: Perm state national research Institute, 2020).

[3] M. Jacquement, "Beyond the speech community: On belonging to a multilingual diasporic and digital social network", Language and Communication Vol: 68 (2019): 46-56; K. Kozminska; L. Schulte; N. Hawker y R. Hall, "Language, Mobility and Belonging", Language and Communication Vol: 68 (2019): 1-5; V. L. Hemmler y A. K. Kibler, "«You ARE Immigrant … but Not Like US»: A discourse analysis of immigrants students' positioning of undocumented immigrants in a CLD classroom", Linguistics and Education Vol: 504 (2019): 100763 y M. Del-Teso-Craviotto, "Emmigrants in contemporary Spanish press: A socio-cognitive approach", Discourse, Context and Media Vol: 29 (2019): 100299.

[4] A. A. Leontiev, Fundamentals of psycholinguistics (Moscow: Smysl, 1997).

The process of association is quite interesting being a twofold process: "by associating an individual reproduces both personal experience and typical repeating experience, i.e. linguistic and social experience"[5]. Therefore, on the basis of spontaneous associations that arise in the subject's mind we can consider both individual characteristics of perception of an individual and features of perception of reality by a certain community or group of people. The focus of this study is on the image of the world which is considered as a fundamental component of the ethnic culture and which exists in the minds of bilinguals belonging to Turkmen culture. The basic idea of the present study lies in the fact that many specific features of the national image of the world reflect the knowledge unrecognized by native speakers, and are important and interesting from the point of view of intercultural communication. In our opinion, the analysis of the meanings behind a certain word allows us to single out in the cognitive base of a communicant as a representative of a sociocultural community culturally and nationally determined components that may have both common and different features.

Material and methods

The informants in the experiment were 32 people of different backgrounds; they were students, housewives, salespeople, teachers, unemployed retired citizens of Turkmenistan. The respondents' age varies from 18 to 70 years. The experiment involved both men and women, however gender was not specifically considered as it is beyond the scope of this study. Housewives, salespeople, teachers, pensioners that took part in the experiment were of about 30 to 70 years of age, students from 19 to 30 years old (in their previous experience they worked and studied in Russia). Each informant gave averagely from 1 to 9 responses and the total number of associations was 292. Quantitative analysis of the material obtained as a result of the free associative experiment allows us to form an associative-verbal field. The research material is represented by the words Homeland, Russia, Migrant, Home and Family. The choice of words stimulus is not accidental since in any society these words belong to the sphere of "eternal values" and reveal the specifics of culture's mental code. The concepts expressed by these words represent one of the most important mental, linguistic and cultural constants that make up the national picture of the world. The cognitive system of each person contains both personal information and information obtained on the basis of the individual's social existence.

Results and discussion

Associative experiment has long been recognized as a reliable way to study the content of a native speaker's language consciousness. This is due to the fact that the associative field consisting of verbal reactions of the subjects shows "the content included in the national mental image of a particular cultural object"[6]. The semantic field is "an indissoluble unity of meanings, processes and results of the cognitive-discursive activity of individuals and society: one does not exist without the other, and this ensures the dynamic continuum nature of the meaning of the word"[7]. The associative experiment allows us to

[5] L. A. Pautova, "Associative experiment: experience of sociological application", Sociology: methodology, methods, mathematical models Vol: 24 (2007): 149–168 y A. A. Zalevskaya, Introduction to psycholinguistics (Moscow: RSUH, 2000).

[6] N. V. Ufimtseva, Ethical character, self-image and language consciousness of Russians. Language consciousness: formation and functioning: collection of articles (2000): 135-170.

[7] N. I. Kurganova, "Associative experiment as a method of studying the meaning of a living word", Questions of psycholinguistics Vol: 3 num (41) (2019): 24-37

model the structural and operational parameters of the meaning of a 'living' speech word. The structural method is based on the analysis of semantic connections between the stimulus word and the associative reactions.

Let's consider the received reactions, define the cognitive layers according to the quantitative parameters, and simulate the cognitive structure of the word meaning. Note that the modeling of structural parameters does not just fix a set of meanings that are reproduced in the process of semantic activity but also ranks them in accordance with the values of cultures, experience and knowledge of native speakers.

Semantic field of the word "*Homeland*". For this word 32 informants gave 54 responses, which we distributed across micro-fields.

Microfield "*State*" (18 reactions): Turkmenistan (17); Turkmenia (1).

Microfield "*Feelings, evaluations*" (16): warmth (3); my country (2); Fatherland (2); Homeland (2); my city (1); White Marble Ashgabat (1); native land (1); love (1); calm (1); happiness (1); native (1).

Micro-field "*Territorial Unit*" (15): Dashaguz / the city of Dashaguz (4); territory (2); city (2); Mary region (2); Ashgabat (1); Balkan (1); the city of Yoloten (1); Zheletaddin Street (1); place where you were born (1).

Micro-field "*Natural landscape objects and phenomena*" (4): greenery (1); desert (1); sun (1); fruit (1).

Micro-field "*Family*" (1): family (1).

For the informants born in Turkmenistan the reactions *Turkmenistan* and *Turkmenia* to the stimulus word "*Homeland"* seem natural to us. Variants of the name are explained by the fact that since 1924 Turkmenistan was officially called the Turkmen Soviet Socialist Republic or Turkmenia, and in 1991 it was assigned the modern name, or rather restored the historical one. This micro-field contains 18 reactions, and with a small difference from the rest of the micro-fields it is the central layer of the meaning of the word "*Homeland"* for our informants.

As a rule, the image of Homeland evokes positive feelings. Therefore, the micro-field "*Feelings, emotions, ratings*" contains either neutral evaluations or positive ones (*happiness*, *native land*). In a similar research addressed to the language consciousness of 40 native Russian informants and 40 native Chinese informants the word *"Homeland"* provoked one negative reaction from a young Russian informant ("*About my Homeland: I don't give a damn about my country. I am more interested in my concerns and my problems. As Russian writer Saltykov-Shchedrin said: 'in Russia, they can do two things: drink and steal.' This is how I see my Homeland"*). There are no negative reactions in this study. The reaction "*White Marble Ashgabat"*, though isolated, is natural: this city with the poetic name Eshg-Abad in the Turkic language (which means "inhabited by lovers"), was included in the Guinness Book of records as the city with the largest number of buildings made of white marble in the world. Another meaning is *Snow-White Ashgabat*. Ashgabat is a neat and clean city surrounded by the greenery.

Stylistically colored synonyms for the word "*Homeland"* (*Fatherland, Motherland*), as we believe, reflect the attitude to the place of birth as the land of ancestors, emphasize the continuous spiritual connection with the historical past. This micro-field counts with 16 reactions. Along with the perception of Homeland as a "*State*", a person has a narrower understanding of this word as a "*small Homeland"* – it is a city, a street, a place where you were born. The third largest micro-field which we have designated as a "*Territorial unit"* (15), contains specific designations for "*small Homeland*": for example, Dashoguz is a city in the North-East of the country, it is the capital of the Dashoguz velayat located 546 km from the capital of Turkmenistan, Ashgabat, and 76.6 km from the city of Nukus – the capital of Karakalpakstan of the Republic of Uzbekistan; or Mary, which is a city in the South of Turkmenistan, named after the ancient city of Merv, the center of the Mary velayat, the fourth largest city of Turkmenistan.

The image of Homeland is usually associated with nature and climate. There are stable stereotypes, e.g. "Russia is a cold country", etc. This micro-field is not numerous (4), but it accurately conveys the natural and climatic color (*greenery, desert, sun, fruit*). Only one informant produced the association "*Family*" on the word "*Homeland*".

Thus, the semantic field of the word "*Homeland*", which exists in the naive consciousness of Turkmen informants, consists of emotionally "restrained" neutral reactions that do not allow us to fully convey the national flavor of this country: for example, there are no names of famous personalities, historical figures who made a mark in history.

The semantic field of the word *"Russia"* (63 reactions). It is noteworthy that the associations with this word make it possible to distribute them among a greater number of micro-fields than in the previous case, i.e., the semantic potential of this word is wider.

Micro-field "*Natural Landscape Objects and Phenomena*" (22): snow (6); forest / woods (5); cold (3); frost (2); birch / Russian birch (2); rain (1); where the edge is not visible (1); pure nature (1); open spaces (1).

Micro-field "*Territorial Unit*" (10): Moscow (3); country (3); Kazan (1); Perm (1); Sochi (1); grandmother's house in the village (1).

Micro-field "*Feelings, Evaluations, Emotions*" (9): neighboring friendly country (2); large country (2); beautiful city (1); lovely (1); beautiful (1); charming country (1); good (1).

Micro-field "*Symbols*" (8): Matryoshka (2); bear (2); samovar (1); Red Square (1); flag (1); Kremlin (1).

Micro-field "*Education"* (4): education (3); academic years (1).

Micro-field "*Famous People*" (3): Putin (2); Pushkin (1).

Micro-field "*People*" (3): relatives on my mother's side (1); good people (1): my mother's homeland (1).

Micro-field "*State*" (2): state (1); USSR (1).

Micro-field "*Kitchen*" (1): vatrushka (cheesecake) (1).

Micro-field "*Language*" (1): the Russian language (1).

Quantitatively responses reflecting the nature, landscape, and climate of Russia predominate (22). Turkmenistan is characterized by hot and dry summers, mild and snowless winters, that is the reason why informants associate Russia with snow, cold, rain, emphasize the expanse, the presence of forests (in Turkmenistan desert and semi-desert vegetation prevails). The second in number of reactions (10) is the micro-field "*Territorial Unit"*. This micro-field is represented by the designation of the capital of Russia *Moscow* (3 reactions); the neutral word *Country* (3); and single reactions (*Kazan, Perm, Sochi, my grandmother's house in the village*). The third micro-field "Feelings, Emotions, Evaluations" consists of 9 reactions. Taking into consideration restrained reactions to the word-stimulus "*Homeland*", evaluative and emotional adjectives – reactions to the word *Russia* (*beautiful, lovely, charming*), seem somewhat unexpected. Traditionally, the image of another country is associated with a symbol. Symbols can tell you a lot about the people they represent. There are official and unofficial symbols. Symbols can be animals that people like to associate themselves with. This micro-field is represented by traditional Russian symbols: *matryoshka, bear, samovar*; official Russian symbols: *flag, Kremlin, Red Square*. Perhaps because the informants were trained in Russia (or their children are studying there), a micro-field "*Education*" was formed, and it is represented by 4 reactions. As we have already noted above, associations-designations of famous names for the word "*Homeland*" were not given by the naive Turkmenistan residents. However, we received three responses to the word "*Russia": they are Putin* (2) and *Pushkin* (1). Russia is also associated with *relatives on my mother's side, good people, my mother's homeland* (single reactions), with a neutral reaction – *State* and with the old name – *the USSR*. We have assigned a single *vatrushka* reaction to the micro-field "*Kitchen*", and *the Russian language* reaction to the micro-field with the corresponding name. Thus, associations for the word "*Russia"* among Turkmen are thematically much more diverse than associations for the word "*Homeland"*. In addition to the expected traditional associations with the designation of territory and various feelings towards it, there were associations-symbols, famous names, etc.

Semantic field of the word "*Migrant*". The number of micro-fields of this word was significantly smaller compared to previous words; a total of 35 associations were obtained.

Micro-field "*Man-foreigner*" (32): foreigner (7); newcomer (7); guest (5); migrant (4); tourist (2); traveler (1); a person who changed his place of residence (1); looking for his place on earth (1); a person seeking the best for himself (1); people who have moved to another country (1); person (1); foreigners (1).

Microfield "*Activity*" (2): work (1); emigration (1).

Microfield "*Country*" (1): a foreign country (1).

As you can see, according to our data three micro-fields were formed: "Man-foreigner " (32 reactions), "Activity" (2), "Country" (1). In the focus of attention is a migrant, i.e. *foreigner*, *visitor* (7 reactions each).

Associates in most cases actualize paradigmatic relationships (*traveler, tourist*); there is also a syntagmatic type of relationship: *a person who changed his place of residence*. The given associations are neutral: there are no lexemes containing negative connotations.

We believe that this is explained by the fact that the informants – Turkmen or their relatives – are loyal to migrants, may have had experience of working in another country, in other words they themselves were once migrants. It is different with Russian or European informants who would rather have a negative reaction to this word stimulus.

Semantic field of the word "*Home*" (74 reactions). It is more semantically diverse and is represented by 7 micro-fields.

Micro-field "*Emotions, Evaluations*" (33): coziness / cozy (8); warm / warmth (7); comfort (2); rest (2); my sweet home (1); my favorite room (1); care (1); care for the loved ones (1); love (1); joy (1); unity (1); a place where everything is fine (1); happiness (1); beautiful (1); comfortable (1); native (1); my corner (1); holidays (1).

Micro-field "*Housing, Place*" (14): hearth (2); floor (2); villa (1); cottage (1); housing (1); the place where you live (1); roof (1); common barn (1); native walls (1); my kitchen (1); construction (1); wall (1).

Micro-field "*Family Members, People*" (12): family (5); mom (3); children (2); dad (1); neighbors (1).

Micro-field "*Way of Life"* (7): life (1); common dining table (1); household (1); delicious dishes (1); family holidays (1); mother's cooking (1); bed (1).

Micro-field "*Natural Landscape Objects*" (7): my city / garden (3); my garden (1); cherries (1); I love my garden (1); patch (1).

Micro-field "*Native Land*" (3): Homeland (1); native place (1); where we return every day (1).

Such semantic features as "Emotions, Evaluations" are objectified by respondents (the largest number of reactions is 33). In the core of the associative micro-field there are cognitive attributes *warm* and *cozy*; there are also other definitions with positive connotations (*beautiful, native*). Then there are reactions that reflect *house* as a dwelling in various versions (*cottage, villa*), parts and elements of the house (*roof, wall*). It is noteworthy that the associate *hearth* is also used in Turkmenistan to refer to a cauldron – one of the important elements of Turkmen utensils widely used in the household. Cauldron is one of the most important symbolic objects of the Turkmen worldview. It is a symbol of prosperity, hospitality, community, unity and integrity of the people.

By the number of reactions the micro-field "*Family Members, People*" (12 reactions) is the third: in the Turcoman language *children* are of the highest value which is reflected in the paroemia "*House with children – a spectacle, house without children – a cemetery"*[8]. In the fourth place there is "*Way of Life"*. It is notable that there were no specific associations with the Turkmen house. We expected that there would be specific respondents' reactions which are possible only in the Turkmen cultural context but we did not notice any peculiarity of the picture of Turkmen house.

[8] Proverbs of the Turkmen people. Retrieved from: https://millionstatusov.ru/poslovitsi/aut/tm/page-2.html

"*Natural Landscape Objects*" (7 reactions) is the fifth by the number of reactions. It has the usual associations for any territory: *my garden*, *vegetable patch*. We referred these three reactions to the attribute "*native land"*.

Semantic field of the word "*Native people"* (65 reactions).

Micro-field "Relatives, family" (45): parents / parent (10); sister / sisters (7); mom / my mom (6); children (5); family (5); husband (4); brother / little brother (4); nephew (1); relatives (1); son (1); daughter-in-law (1).

Micro-field "*People*" (9): close soul / close souls (3); close (2); close creature (1); my boyfriend (1); People who understand you and who do not turn away from you (1); neighbors (1).

Micro-field "*Emotional and Psychological State*" (11): joy (2); trust (1); care (1); love (1); support (1); laughter (1); a smile on the faces of people you love (1); gifts (1); support (1); respect (1).

Emotionally restrained reactions which we included in the micro-field "*Relatives, Family*" are most numerous; they represent names of various relatives (*parents, mom, daughter*). One of the reactions in this micro-field is *little brother*, which means younger brother, and we consider it quite unexpected. The reaction *parents* (10) in this micro-field is the most frequent. In our opinion, this is not accidental: according to informants the basis of the Turkmen family is the sanctity of marriage, the responsibility of parents for raising children and the duty of children to parents; Turkmen families traditionally retain unquestioned authority and deep respect for their parents. After marriage, sons seek to live near their father's home in order to constantly help their parents and take care of them. Strong family ties that were valued for centuries are still considered to be unshakable. The Turkmen proverb says: "*Silver and gold have no age, and mother and father have no price*"[9].

Reactions that we included in the micro-field "*People*" (*close soul, my boyfriend*) and in the micro-field "*Emotional and Psychological State*" (*joy, care, laughter*, etc.) were more emotional. The associations of these micro-fields also do not allow us to identify specific features of the Turkmen culture.

In ethnic Turkmen society a person who does not have his own relatives is a person of antisocial behavior. Family and tribal ties function as social relations proper, which is reflected in paroemias: *"A child without a father is an orphan, without a mother is a slave" / "The heart of a father and mother is in children; the heart of a son and daughter is in the mountains and steppes" / "I tell it to my daughter, and you, my daughter-in-law, listen to it!"*[10]*.*

Conclusion

The thematic analysis of micro-fields is both a way to learn the language picture of the world (in our case – a naïve picture of the world) and a way to study inter-level

[9] Proverbs of the Turkmen people. Retrieved from: https://millionstatusov.ru/poslovitsi/aut/tm/page-2.html

[10] Proverbs of the Turkmen people…

language relations and operations performed by a person. The difficulty in studying the operational parameters of meaning is that the processes and mechanisms of obtaining knowledge are themselves inaccessible to conscious introspection; they are hidden from direct observation. In addition, in psycholinguistics and ethnopsycholinguistics there is no corresponding method for reconstructing speech action based on an associative experiment, which is why operational knowledge (knowledge of procedures) is practically not studied in Russian linguistics.

With the help of a free associative experiment, we tried to reflect a fragment of the image of the world that exists in the naive consciousness of bilingual Turkmen informants. The study allows us to draw the following conclusion: due to the closed nature of the Turkmen nation and the use of the respondents of predominantly rational-analytical strategy in association we failed to form a national-specific picture of the world. The associations given by the respondents demonstrate general cultural meanings that exist in the naive consciousness of modern speakers of Turkmen language and Turkmen culture.

The free associative experiment realized by the authors of the article is aimed not only at revealing attitudes to socially significant phenomena, but also at analyzing how tolerant the consciousness of informants is. The existence of a tolerant consciousness is viewed as a necessary condition for the stability of the society, the openness of society to the outside world and to other cultural norms and principles. The presented analysis of associates demonstrated the tolerant consciousness of bilingual Turkmen informants, which was manifested in informants' positive attitudes, respect, and social interest.

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