

ТЕОРИЯ И МЕТОДИКА ПРЕПОДАВАНИЯ

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LANGUAGE, CONSCIOUSNESS AND CULTURE: SOME SUGGESTIONS TO DEVELOP FURTHER THE MOSCOW SCHOOL OF PSYCHOLINGUISTICS

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Abstract. The Moscow school of psycholinguistics offers an applied, Neo-Humboldtian and Vygotskian approach to the problem of how language consolidates the cognitive and cultural experience of a community. The Moscow school of psycholinguistics places a great emphasis on culture as a source of conceptualizing experience through cognitive structures such as word associations. It uses natural language semantics as a cognitive approach to meaning and shows how cognition is structured. Traditionally, the Moscow school has perceived the problem of intercultural communication to lie in the systemic and symbolic association of words which are inherent in the local culture. Over the last few decades, Russian psycholinguists have tried to tease apart what they understand to be the cultural specificity of language consciousness by analysing cross-linguistic data from free association experiments. The ultimate objective with this research is to map cross-cultural ontologies with a view to facilitating intercultural communication, but also as a means of appreciating more fully other cultures. With the ongoing trend of globalisation, cultural fluidity and the beckoning opportunities that Big Data analytics will surely provide, it is perhaps time to pause to reconsider future avenues of research within the exciting research paradigm of cultural semantics. It is also an opportunity to reconfigure some of the terminology such as linguistic ‘worldview’ which should be understood *not* as a fixed conception of the world which envelops the thinking subject, but more as a continually evolving ‘cultural mindset’ that articulates different perceptions of the world. As more linguists question generative theories of language, interest in cultural semantics is expected to accelerate and might embrace the semantic association tools that the Moscow school has developed. This article makes a few tentative suggestions as to how the Moscow school could refashion the renewed interest in cultural lexical associations and its related findings on pragmatically conditioned meanings. By engaging with ethnographic data, speech acts and by developing more of an ethnopragmatic approach that examines the diversity of speech practices and shows how both syntax and morphology encode grammar, the Moscow school should be well positioned to continue to reap the dividends of the recent interest in the language culture interface. As ethnography begins to team up with the use of digital data and Smartphone dictionary apps., our resources should become at some point in the future far more comprehensive than they ever have been before. Attempts to disentangle the language, culture, consciousness nexus from lexical associations based on Big Data analytics might be one of the beneficiaries of these developments.

Keywords: language; culture; consciousness; Russian psycholinguistics; cultural mindset.

Introduction

Language is integral to cultural mindset. When army tanks were introduced into Africa by the European powers, the Swahili word chosen for the vehicle was *faru* meaning ‘rhinoceros’. On the other hand, the reason they were called ‘tanks’ in English is that the British developed them in the desert of North Africa. To keep the project secret, they said they were experimenting on a new kind of (water) ‘tank’ for the desert. Languages thus represent different ways of thinking about the world. Language is *neither* an empty container that conveys pre-existing meanings *nor* is language a set of labels that can be placed on pre-existing concepts. Contrary to what generative linguists might believe, language is also much more than a set of rules. Every aspect of language (syntax, morphology etc.) is socially influenced and culturally meaningful. Linguistic anthropologists claim that language cannot in fact be understood without reference to the particular social contexts in which it is used. According to linguistic anthropologists [1–4], language is not a static, neutral medium for communication, but rather a set of socially embedded practices. Language is thus inherently social; language and culture co-evolve in a symbiotic relationship and are dialectic by nature. Language shapes and is shaped by cultural values and social power, and linguistic anthropologists want to find out how this occurs.

When thinking about how language is shaped by culture, one might ask at a local level what is it that makes language meaningful? Language ‘is’ what its speakers believe it to be. Following Kroskrity [5], language ideologies are understood as ‘beliefs or feelings about language as used in their social worlds’. Unsurprisingly perhaps, it turns out that language ideologies determine conceptualisations of language amongst linguists as well as speech communities. For instance, language is often constituted by Russian linguists in terms of national stereotypes. As such, Russians have a tendency to view culture as self-contained entities, the objectification perhaps of the *Volksgeist*. Indeed, there is even a discipline devoted to this kind of study – culturology. Echoes of this can be seen in the work of Friedrich [6] where language and culture constitute a single domain.

Some might say this represents the functionalist approach based on an essentialist view of culture where national cultures are seen to be more or less static. In contrast to this, a constructivist approach would conceive of culture as dynamic and not the same for entire national groups.

The purpose of this article is to show how these language ideologies of Russian linguists might still shed new light on age old problems of the relationship between language, culture and consciousness. In tackling this problem, the starting point for many Russian psycholinguistics is that words

are integrated into the 'worldview' of a dominant conceptual paradigm. Russian psycholinguistics has followed the Boasian approach of attempting to discover how languages encode their speakers' distinctive view of the world. In doing so, care has been taken not to mistake metaphoricity for literal usage when thinking about language and culture. Just because one culture talks about half past ten being half past nine (Danish, Swedish, Norwegian) does not mean these cultures have a different concept of time. Metaphoric mappings differ between languages, often substantially so. Germans say *vorgestern*, the French *avant-hier*. In English, we have to say 'the day before yesterday'. The meaning is the same. Does this really tell us anything significant about the differences in the way that English and German speakers perceive time? As we will come onto see, an accurate understanding of 'cultural mindsets' requires an examination of this 'patterning' of conceptual frameworks and paths, and not looking at words in isolation. Language must be embedded within a matrix of human interaction [7].

Metaphors are grounded in experience and not 'cultural mindsets', and one of the difficulties is that language and experience are conjoined and inseparable for language is the vehicle for nearly every type of cultural expression [8]. In English, one can 'swallow an idea', but this does not tell us anything about the 'cultural mindset' of English speakers. In turn, phenomenology with its embodied understanding of language has shown that language and consciousness are also intertwined in a symbiotic relationship: 'experience no sooner comes into consciousness than it becomes penetrated by linguistic forms' [9]. Phenomenologists want to stress the primacy of human experience in a linguistically and culturally bound reality [3, 4, 10], and we believe phenomenology can help inform further development in the Moscow school approach. Disentangling the relationship between language and culture is thus problematic, but it is still a legitimate question to ask how the primacy of human experience plays out in the language culture interface. Whilst the relationship between language and culture is a mutually influencing interactive one, the Moscow school of Russian psycholinguistics suggests that it is in fact culture as the cultivation of the mind through language and thought that takes priority. But before turning to the language-culture interface, let us look briefly at the background of the 'cultural mindset' or language ideology of the Russian psycholinguists themselves.

Russian psycholinguistics has steered clear of many of the mentalist and universalist tendencies that characterise contemporary linguistics and has remained focused on the questions of the language and culture interface. Fortunately, much of Russian linguistics has never really been tarred with the innatist brush and its findings are therefore relevant to every linguistic anthropologist interested in the notion of language as symbolic thought. The flawed and rather obsessive search for linguistic universals has often left the questions of linguistic and cultural consciousness falling down the cracks of

interdisciplinary niches. However, this has not been the case in Russia. Russian psycholinguistics offers an applied approach to the problem of language and consciousness that attempts to take the perspective of a cultural insider. Using the association method (explained subsequently), it can be observed for instance that the notion of FRIEND occupies a central place in what we might call the linguistic consciousness of Russian speakers [11]. A friend is viewed as FAITHFUL (69), RELIABLE (9), FOREVER (2), TILL DEATH (1). It has been shown that from the age of 10, the notion of FRIEND becomes one of the key semantic primes for a Russian speaker [12] (the numbers in brackets represent the number of times the word was given as an association). One might say therefore that the linguistic consciousness of an average Russian speaker is rather friend-centric. For a native English speaker, the notion of friend plays much less of a central role in the cultural psyche, appearing as entry number 73 (as opposed to 8 for Russian speakers) on an index of cultural semantic primes for native English speakers. What is more, the lexical associations of the word 'friend' are quite different for the average English speaker: ENEMY (22); FOE (9); GIRL (4); GOOD (4) as well as ACQUAINTANCE, COMPANION and COLLEAGUE. Reference is thus made to the more typical collocations of the word as opposed to the actual qualities of what they perceive a 'friend' to be.

It is claimed that such analyses illustrate the contrasts in cultural consciousness between English and Russian speakers, but some might say the 'glocalisation' of English renders it problematic to speak of the prototypical English speaker. For many Russian linguists, culture is constituted by socially shared symbolic meaning and therefore cannot be biologically grounded; language is thought of as the product of cultural transmission because it shares experiences and enhances cognition (cf. Nelson and Shaw [13]).

More specifically, Russian psycholinguistics has its roots in Vygotsky's [14] vision of language and culture and his Sociocultural Theory which emphasized the importance of social interaction in the development of cognition. Russian psycholinguistics sees culture as primarily a system of consciousness and in doing so pays homage to Humboldt's notion of *Weltansicht* ('worldview'), i.e. the processing of the world through the faculty of language. One of the reasons so few linguists took up Humboldt's work might be that the *Weltansicht* term has been frequently misunderstood with *Weltanschauung* and all its ideological undertones. In discussions of language and thought, Humboldt's work has been almost entirely ignored in favour of the Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis. When quoted as pithy aphorisms, this hypothesis is also often misunderstood. Steiner [15] and Underhill [16] have taken seriously Humboldt's contributions to linguistics.

Humboldt's views were carried on by Leo Weisgerber and the Neo-Humboldtians with their notion of *sprachliches Weltbild*. Weisgerber showed how meaning is interrelated with many different aspects of human experience.

Much of Humboldt's work has been hopelessly misunderstood, but the main idea was that every language, a particular community's mother tongue, was a repository of cognitive content. The 'worldview' is 'the capacity which language bestows upon us to form the concepts with which we think and which we need in order to communicate' [16]. A linguistic 'worldview' does not interpret the world. Instead, it enables man to form a concept of the world through language by 'furnishing him with a prior linguistic comprehension of the world' [17].

Humboldt was interested in the question of how we gain access to the 'worldview' of a foreign language speaker, and this too is the question that the Russian psycholinguists have taken up in earnest. The Russian contribution to the notion of 'worldview' has been an enriching and thought-provoking one, but one that has been largely misunderstood beyond Russia. It might be perceived to be anachronistic, ethnocentric and cultural essentialist; a product of a 'cold war' mentality where a cultural specificity of consciousness was ring-fenced in terms of nationality alone. Some might see it as having a tendency to engage with folk linguistic stereotypes. The neo-Whorfian approach tends to view particular languages as demarcated, cognitively represented systems in which linguistic meaning is inherent. For these reasons perhaps, many linguists shy away from engaging with schools of thought that seem too deterministic in their approach to language and culture. However, the Russian approach to meaning differs from the Whorfian one. Whilst Whorf focuses on the linguistic meaning of words, the Russian psycholinguistic interpretation focuses on the human activity and views the meaning as a unit of consciousness, as an 'object' meaning externalised by a word. This kind of interpretation focuses on the reality of human interaction with objects and the meaning develops as a result of this interaction.

Another approach that might seem to be deterministic is Wierzbicka's Natural Semantic Metalanguage (NSM) model whose objectives are related (but quite different) to the Moscow school and that has resulted in considerable discussion (both positive and negative). NSM attempts to reduce the cultural semantics of all lexicons down to a restricted set of semantic primes. One of the appeals of this model is that unlike most linguistic theories it is non Anglo-centric and is intelligible to people without specialist linguistic training. With its lexical approach where words are considered society's most basic cultural artefacts, the Moscow school and NSM might have similar appeal, tapping into the same audience in order to advance the discussion on the relationship between language, culture and consciousness. Instead of breaking down the meaning of 'untranslatable' culture-specific words such as the Russian word *дыша* (often translated as 'soul') into semantic primes, the Moscow school relies on associations. With this example, the associations of *дыша* in Russian are: 'body', 'man', 'God'; 'heart', 'man', 'darkness', 'kindness' etc. (source: the Russian Associative Dictionary, Karaulov, Sorokin, Tarasov, Ufimtseva, Cherkasova [18]).

In the experience of Leonard, the word is often used to refer to the spirit of humility of a person and thus one could say in Russian that you wish to see his or her *dyua* perhaps in the context of getting to know somebody whereas in English it would seem particular to say that you wanted to see somebody's 'soul'. Instead, we might talk of somebody's 'spirit'. NSM effectively attempts to overcome this translation deficit by combining primes with universally intelligible canonical sentences. The Moscow school approach would benefit from an approach whereby the associations were better contextualized with their various collocations embedded in online corpora resources.

Returning to Humboldt, he thought language was a form of consciousness, the manifestation of a psychic life of a given community: a notion which sits somewhat awkwardly in any contemporary, multiculturalist society. Humboldt claimed that language did not just reflect consciousness, but actually shaped it. Many Russian linguists have pursued research in this vain, showing how language consolidates the cognitive experience of a community. The underlying belief is that language imposes a certain conceptualisation of reality on its users. However, it is important to note that Humboldt believed that in order to understand a worldview of a foreign language, a speaker must understand how a language harnesses and organises concepts. One cannot just look at words in isolation, but one needs to understand the context of their associations. Understanding cultural mindsets requires an examination of this 'patterning' [19, 20] or unconscious association of words and conceptual frameworks and paths. It is by analysing this Sapirian 'patterning' that Russian psycholinguistics will have most to offer.

If correctly interpreted, the Moscow school's cultural semantic analyses are illuminating and insightful. A correct interpretation should not allow one to deduce from associative experiments (discussed subsequently) that lexical associations are the sole ingredients of so-called *cultural codes*. Furthermore, cultural codes should not be seen as self-contained cultural concepts specific to nation-states. Even if symbolic interpretations differ between cultures, social cognition with regards to many aspects of social institutions such as, say, family and religion are of course shared. A revised Russian psycholinguistic approach to language, culture and consciousness embraces therefore a perspective that is thus more culturally fluid than before.

Russian psycholinguistics can now present to an English speaking audience its latest thinking on language, culture and consciousness in *revised* terms. Firstly, it is recognized that a linguistic 'worldview' should be understood *not* as a fixed conception of the world which envelops the thinking subject, but more as a continually evolving 'cultural mindset' that articulates different perceptions of the world. In this respect, Russian psycholinguistics would remain faithful to their Vygotskyian and Humboldtian roots, providing Humboldt's work is for once correctly understood [16], but at the same

time take the research in a new direction. Underhill [16] offers an excellent analysis of how Humboldt has been so widely misunderstood.

In updating the Moscow school's views on the language, culture, consciousness nexus, the broad approach and teleology would remain largely the same but the terminology would be modified to reflect a less deterministic approach. It is now understood that the term 'worldview' can be problematic for it might imply that speech communities are somehow ideologically homogenous and self-contained, and one might speak instead in terms of 'cultural mindsets' as understood through language. It is worthwhile thus to be wary of what one might call the constraints of language-worldview isomorphism: there is not a one-to-one relationship between one language and one nation-state. The idea that a worldview is fixed by one's language would amount to a strong version of the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis and is rightly rejected by almost everybody. Linguistic output is not a direct expression of reality for there are 'several prisms through which information must pass before a speaker pronounces an utterance' [21]. When conducting research on language and consciousness, the importance of engaging with the phenomena of globalisation and the cultural fluidity that it implies should also be understood. Furthermore, it should be taken into consideration that ideologies can harness or pervert the way we see the world. Lakoff [22] has shown for instance how political metaphors in American English reflect the ideology of the family.

Russian psycholinguistics may no longer wish to speak in terms of the Humboldtian *Weltansicht*, but it would be wrong to dispense altogether with Humboldt's work on language. In fact, an alternative way to approach the 'cultural mindset' might be via Humboldt's *Sprachsinn* ('the sense of language'). Humboldt meant by this the capacity for thought that language enables. *Sprachsinn* represents a 'sense of language' at an individual, phenomenological level, something that a language learner is acutely aware of when he starts to learn a language. *Sprachsinn* also refers to our shared understanding as a linguistic community. In the context of learning a new language, this dynamic, vital 'sense of language' gives us a phenomenological and experiential understanding or 'feel' for a new language, but also enables us to reflect on the sense of our mother tongue with original perspectives.

To speak in terms of the phenomenological 'feel' of language represents a move away from the previous Russian psycholinguistic research which spoke exclusively in terms of mental objects and linguistic worldviews. According to previous interpretations, the picture of a mental object included a linguistic picture. It was a cognitive, integrationist (and not separatist) approach to language where language and culture are linked through a paradox of reciprocal dependence. Language signs should not be considered in isolation from, but in relation to other forms of cultural behavior or cognition. As previously noted, the Moscow school analysis over-

lapped significantly with the cultural semantics and Natural Semantic Metalanguage (NSM) of Wierzbicka [23], and as we shall see has retained a number of characteristics germane to cultural semantics. The research is conducted in the same spirit, that is to say the objective is to unearth the conceptualisations embedded in language, not in explaining why a particular language embodies a particular conceptualisation [24]. A linguistic anthropologist might consider if the overall analysis would however be richer if the Moscow school engaged with the latter question too. Both models aim to identify and describe culture-specific elements of meaning and cognition, but the Moscow school has not focused on the universalist search for 'cultural keywords' or 'semantic primes' in the same way that NSM has. Wierzbicka is certainly right that 'in searching for either universal or culture-specific features of cognition we are searching for certain generalizations' [25], and her work should be applauded for finding a way to describe linguistic meaning non-ethnocentrically. However, simplifying everything to a core of semantic primes is perhaps not a viable solution to the overall problem, or at least it is only part of the solution. But that is not to play-down Wierzbicka's extraordinary contribution to cultural semantics.

It is worth perhaps pausing at this point to remind ourselves that Sapir rejected on empirical grounds the idea that culture and language were 'in any true sense causally related. Culture [he claimed] may be defined as *what* a society does and thinks. Language is a particular *how* of thought [26]. Some of the association experiments that we will come onto look at could perhaps be interpreted as predisposing some kind of causality between language and culture. We should be careful not to conflate linguistic terms and the psychological and cultural meaning of concepts to which they are linked. In this regard, Slobin [27] would presumably disagree with some of the findings of the Moscow school when he states that 'language evokes ideas; it does not represent them. Linguistic expression is thus not a straightforward map of consciousness or thought. It is a highly selective and conventionally schematic map'. A similar criticism has of course been levelled at the work of Sapir and Whorf.

Within the literature in English on language and the cultural meaning of concepts, research has focused overwhelmingly on the so-called Sapir-Whorf hypothesis. These discussions tend to assume the strong version of the hypothesis and refute it on the grounds of ethnocentrism and for reasons that it implies the map between thought and linguistic expression is straightforward. Linguistic relativism has thus become something of a *bête noire* for many linguists. Linguistic relativity assumes that there are differences between the perception of the world entrenched in languages from different cultures whereas determinists would have us believe that a national language actually conditions human cognition. With this in mind, let us now turn our attention to the Russian notion of culture as a system of consciousness.

Culture as a system of consciousness

In line perhaps with the thinking of Herder and Humboldt (but without the Romantic connotations of the former), Russian psycholinguists [28] have had a tendency to present the 'common consciousness' of a culture as something systemic. According to Tarasov [29], one of the difficulties of intercultural communication lies in the fact that the meaning of words is linked to a network of symbolic associations that differ from culture to culture. To state the obvious, a thought cannot be directly transferred from one head to another. Humboldt [30] made similar observations and believed that linguistic worldviews had 'ethnic-subjective' characters. Nowadays, we might prefer to speak of different groups and nation-states having access to different cultural mindsets as seen through language. The organisation of these cultural mindsets conceptualised as a combination of conceptual and perceptual knowledge and articulated through language represents what a number of Russian linguists [29] have coined 'verbal or 'linguistic consciousness'. To put it another way, in accordance with the Moscow school of psycholinguistics, 'linguistic consciousness' refers to the aggregate of cultural knowledge (including sensual perception) of a group of people (perhaps defined in terms of nation-state, tribe or even ideological group) as externalised through language. This notion of linguistic consciousness represents both conceptual inner speech and spoken language (with its phonological structure as a correlate of consciousness) as simultaneous, functional units [28, 31].

As noted in the Introduction, there is nowadays a broad consensus amongst linguistic anthropologists that language is a reflection of social and cultural life, but the direction of causality between language and culture remains a moot point. Russian psycholinguistics works on the proviso that it is culture (and not language) that 'shapes' meaning through an 'activity structure' [32]. This 'activity structure' consists of the interplay between inner speech and spoken language as it rises to the phonological level and it is this interplay that is invoked when Russian psycholinguists speak of 'linguistic consciousness'. According to Leontiev's 'activity structure', language consists of two languages, the formal one (the structure) and the one containing the meanings. This linguistic consciousness is distributed amongst the various layers of perception in all its modalities. The notion of consciousness is different from 'thought' which should be understood as 'conceptual structure' and about which we can say relatively little: no amount of introspection is going to yield the computational form of thought' [33]. It is also this interaction that provides access to a foreign culture. Zhinkin [31] makes the point that this inner speech as a means of mediating the activity of the mind is not in any particular language but is instead a vehicle for the spoken articulation of 'images' or 'images of the world' (*obraz mira*).

When Russian psycholinguists speak in terms of *culture* as a system of consciousness, they refer then in a rather Malinowskian spirit to the col-

lective, symbolic and cultural associations of the words of a language. As we saw in the opening example, there is clearly an intimate relationship between the development of language and culture. As noted in the Introduction, the two are intermingled and the task of disentangling them is seldom straightforward. Research suggests that these prototypical, cultural associations can vary considerably from language to language presenting all kinds of obstacles for the language learner and for intercultural communication more generally. Any translator knows that languages seldom line up exactly and associative experiments have shown the magnitude of some of these cultural semantic discrepancies. Inevitably, we understand and assess another culture from the position of our own. In order to close this gap, we would need a better understanding of the opposing or new culture's symbolic and cultural associations that lie behind the words of the language, but also through non-verbal cultural norms. Anthropologists access the latter through ethnography. Some of these cultural differences are not as insurmountable as sometimes presented by certain Russian psycholinguists [34] who seemed to insist on cultures being 'ethnically conditioned'. Through ethnography based on participation observation and living long-term in the target culture, one will gradually not only understand but absorb the new network of associations. Anthropologists that have done long-term fieldwork in alien environments will be aware of this. Cultural 'recoding' is not a simple matter, but it is not impossible. From a Russian perspective, it might seem that Russia and the West occupy self-contained, independent cultural units, but the cultural and semantic gaps are eminently bridgeable and we are able to reconceptualise existing cultural conceptualisations. That is not to say, however, that interpretations of the same communicative act will be identical. Tasarov [29] believed that the obstacles to an identical interpretation lie in the systemic and symbolic associations of words which are inherent to the local culture and that is undoubtedly true.

In recent years, the primary focus of the Moscow school of psycholinguistics has become the issue of the cultural specificity of this language consciousness. Attempts have been made to compare systematically cultural mindsets of groups of speakers that represent quite different cultures and cultural values. The ultimate objective would be to map cross-cultural ontologies with a view to facilitating intercultural communication, but also as a means of appreciating more fully other cultures. In order to fully understand somebody who speaks another language and who represents an unfamiliar culture, it is necessary to understand both the target language as well as the tapestry of rich cultural and symbolic associations behind the words. Tasarov [35] referred to this mental tapestry as the 'images of consciousness'. It is these different systems of knowledge and symbolic culture that frustrate communication between speakers of two different cultures, and not language alone. Once again, Russian psycholinguists believe these cultural differences

to be 'systemic'. In order to facilitate intercultural communication, the systemic structures of respective cultures need to be studied. This brings us back again to the synergies between linguistic anthropology and the Moscow school of psycholinguistics, both of which prioritise the importance of culture as a gateway to grasping the local linguistic consciousness and understanding the cultural concepts embedded in language.

With linguistic anthropology in mind, Robbins [36] shows how different manifestations of consciousness illuminate the difference between socio-centric cultures (e.g. ethnically homogenous tribal cultures, traditional Eastern cultures, Buddhist and Hindu etc.) and individual-centric cultures (Western, European and American cultures). Globalisation and colonialism have blurred many of these distinctions with their homogenizing impacts, but nonetheless Russian psycholinguists would approve of such a binary, dualistic model of cultural understandings of reality. As you might expect, the individual-centric cultures value rationality, logic, objectivity and a scientific perspective whereas with Eastern cultures there is a proclivity towards collective values, collective thinking and the abstract. In the experience of Leonard, Russia falls broadly speaking into the second category. Despite being a multi-ethnic country, in his opinion there appears to be a marked and collective homogeneity in terms of cultural values and representations of reality. One might now accuse him of the same essentialism and reification that one might level at Russian applied psycholinguistics, but he does believe these constructs have more value in understanding the Russian cultural psyche than a diverse Anglosphere culture. The English language is shared nowadays by a multitude of cultural identities. The fact of the matter is Russians do have a different 'worldview' or 'cultural mindset' than speakers of English living in the Anglosphere and this is surely reflected in 'ways of speaking' [37, 38]. Indeed, the Russian contribution would be richer if it were to go beyond purely lexical associations and look at all aspects of cultural pragmatics and ethnosyntax. Pulling apart this 'cultural mindset' is a task that goes beyond word associations. It should ideally go hand-in-hand with a detailed understanding of the historical and ideological make-up of a cultural identity. If undertaken with care and sensitivity, empirical applied psycholinguistic research and ethnography could synergise with one another no end.

Despite the above comments about the shared Russian cultural mindset, it should be borne in mind that *all* cultural conceptualisations are not equally shared by *all* members of a group, but must be somewhat heterogeneously distributed. As convenient as it might be, there is not some collective entity behind human conceptualisation. This means that one should be cautious of essentialist and reductionist tendencies associated with the notion of culture. Cultures are complex, dynamic and constantly being renegotiated. One might argue that the Moscow school of psycholinguistics model of linguistic consciousness has up until now put rather too much onus on a

‘worldview’ being somehow locked in to specific cultures. Living in Russia, Leonard (a British linguist) can understand fully the rationale for this, but in his experience large parts of the world are characterised by a much more heterogeneous cultural mindset that is often divided along political, ideological lines. If one were to look at the US at the moment, one might not wish to talk about native speakers of American English sharing one ‘worldview’, beyond the basic life fundamentals or ‘core values’ at least. The discrepancy in ‘worldviews’ between Trump and Hilary Clinton supporters is surely significant and reflects the fragmented, divided country that it has become. Indeed, politics in large parts of the West has become extremely polarised resulting in two speakers of the same language brought up in the same ‘culture’ sharing quite different ‘worldviews’ on a meta-political level at least.

Methodology for examining linguistic consciousness

Russian psycholinguists have used the associative method to investigate the so-called cultural specificity of linguistic consciousness. The claim is that the systemic character of the cultural mindset of a speaker can be accessed through experiments using associative dictionaries. An associative dictionary enables us to tap into the cultural presuppositions of a group of speakers by analysing the core associations that are assigned to respective words. At present there are a quite a number of associative databases: The Russian Associative Dictionary, The Edinburgh Associative Thesaurus (for English) and The French Associative Dictionary as well as Spanish and Slavic associative dictionaries to name just a few. With these databases, we are able to bring a degree of empirical sensitivity to the question of language and culture-specific cognition, but more are certainly needed. It is worth reminding ourselves at this point that the way people speak about the world is negotiated and constructed by speakers themselves. By understanding what they mean by their words (with all their subtle connotations and verbal associations), we are hopefully moving towards the heart of the cultural psyche of the speakers. We say ‘moving towards’, the associative meaning still depends of course on the experience of the speaker and the hearer on what they both know and think about the world. Digital corpora should in future help us to determine how ‘specific concepts expressed by individual lexical items in specific languages interact with large-scale conceptual mappings found in many different languages’ [39].

This semantic association that lies at the heart of the Moscow school methodology is one of the basic mechanisms of memory; an idea that goes back all the way to John Locke. Two hundred and fifty years later, the Swiss psychiatrist and psychoanalyst, Jung, used word associations in the twentieth century to unravel the subconscious. He showed his patients words. The patient would then say out loud the first thing that came to their mind. His

word association tests showed that words evoke emotions, memories and thoughts that we often tend to ignore. Word associations can be thought of as natural classifiers of the conceptual content of the vocabulary of the language. Ideas and concepts, which are available to the memory of a man are related. This relationship is based on the past experience of a man and, in the final analysis, more or less accurately reproduces objectively existing relationship between the phenomena of the real world. Under certain conditions, a revival of one idea or concept is accompanied by a revival of others ideas correlated with it. Since the associations reflect some significant relations between objects and phenomena of the real world, and thus between the concepts, it is reasonable to conclude that they play an important role in the structure of the lexical system of the language. This was pointed out long ago as by N.V. Krushevskiy [40]: 'Every word is linked to other words by ties of association by similarity; this similarity will not be only external, i.e. sound or structural, morphological, but also internal, semasiological. Or in other words: every word is capable, due to a special mental law, to bring in our mind other words with which it is similar, and is excited by these words'.

Russian applied psycholinguists claim that mass associative experiments can be used to access the linguistic consciousness of language speakers both synchronically and diachronically. For them, it has long been observed that the word not only refers to a particular object, but is a whole network of connotative related additional images. So, what is the evidence of the associative nature of the semantic component of words? Furthermore, can we be sure that word associations compiled through an algorithm for a dictionary are an accurate reflection of a specific culture? To enrich further this paradigm of research, it would be necessary to look in detail at differences in collocations, grammatical behaviour and perhaps most importantly the context in which the words are used. Then, we can begin to identify differences in conceptualisation. One way to do this would be to develop mobile phone apps. for associative dictionaries (already exists for French) with the lexical associations embedded in a schema of collocations in different corpora of online texts. These associative dictionaries would be based on algorithmic sourced Big Data with tens of thousands of data points.

In a cross-cultural context, this data could then be used to identify both cultural similarities and differences at a systemic level. One might compare the associative experiments with Sharifian's [41] schemas of cultural conceptualisation where events, emotions and roles evoke different schemas depending on the relevant culture. An event schema such as a WEDDING taps into cultural models whereby a western Christian interpretation would trigger for instance all kinds of sub-schemas such as CHURCH, RECEPTION, CAKE, SPEECHES etc. Such associative schemas are an attempt at developing a theoretical framework that affords an integrated understanding of the notions of culture and cognition.

Using association experiments, data collected from a large number of informants of different linguistic and ethnic backgrounds showed that speakers select cognitive strategies in line with their own cultural mindset. Comparative research [42] into the Russian and English linguistic consciousness suggested that in accordance with the Russian linguistic image of the world the notion of private ownership was not very significant whereas English speakers had a tendency to view relations more through objects than human interactions. In this respect, the Chinese and Russian linguistic images of the world are apparently closer [43], but the sequencing of cognitive characteristics differs. Russian speakers perceive human interactions firstly in terms of the (1) space around people, and then (2) the people that are nearby and then (3) the objects that are around them. For speakers of Chinese, the sequence is said to be the inverse. Comparatively speaking, it would seem that the Russian consciousness is one that is rather people focused. Associative analyses show that native Russian and English speaker have in some respects different cultural conceptualisations of some very basic things such as WATER. For native speakers of English, WATER is associated with a variety of receptacles that relate to water such as 'tap', 'lake', 'sea' etc. Russian speakers' verbal associations are typically less focused on objects, and relate instead more to abstract concepts and the qualities of the substance. The first association given by Russian speakers was 'life', followed by 'sea', 'river', 'liquid', 'lake', 'wet', 'clean'. Interestingly when Russian bilinguals were asked to name the first associations that came to their mind in English, they did not say 'life' as their first association. 'Life' was then relegated to their third association: 'river', 'ocean', 'life', 'sea', 'fire', 'drink', 'blue'. Bilinguals whose lives are characterized by cross-cultural experiences often navigate between two systems of 'cultural mindsets' (what Wierzbicka calls 'cultural scripts') and these are of course reflected in their use of lexical items.

Popkova's [44] research works with Russian students of English to see how their verbal associations with regards to certain words changes over time. Data was collected on the following concepts: 'belief', 'eternity', 'will', 'time', 'sin', 'melancholy', 'fire' and 'truth'. Students were initially given the Russian word and asked to say in Russian which words came into their head immediately. Then, at the end of their studies (typically 3 or 4 years later) they were asked to give their associations in English. These two fields were then compared with the words that appear in the Kiss, Armstrong and Milroy [45] thesaurus of lexical associations to see to what extent over time their understanding of a concept had moved towards that of a native speaker or whether their cultural conceptualisation remained that of a Russian speaker. Each stimulus word was presented to 100 different subjects. The English speaking subjects were mostly undergraduates from a wide variety of British universities. The age range was from 17–22. The data was collected between 1968 and 1971, so rather dated now. The sex distribu-

tion was 64 per cent male and 36 per cent female. In order for this analysis to be more meaningful, we would need much more comprehensive and recent resources for the English associations.

The results show that over time the cultural conceptualisation of a Russian student of English shifted slightly towards that of the native English speaker, but not entirely. The data suggest, as one might expect, that the fluent speaker of a foreign language does not dispense with his or her indigenous cultural conceptualisations. Russian linguists have used such data as evidence to support their own language ideology whereby cultures remain largely self-contained monadic entities despite globalisation and the kind of cultural fluidity that is beginning to characterise the twenty-first century. Here are a couple examples from the research (Table 1, 2).

Table 1

‘Belief’

Concept	Associations in Russian of Russian speakers	Associations in English of Russian speakers	Associations of English speakers (Kiss, Armstrong and Milroy, 1972)
<i>Вера (belief)</i>	Надежда (Hope) (40), Бог (God) (26), Любовь (Love) (13), Церковь (Church) (13), Религия (Religion) (7)	God (23), Hope (19), Trust (11), Love (7), Strong (7), Church (7), Truth (6), Religion (6), Relief (4), Believe (3), In love (2), In God (2), Faith (2)	Religion (20), God (15), Faith (14), Idea (4), Conviction (2), Creed (2), Disbelief (2), Ideal (2), Thought (2), Trust (2)

Table 2

‘Eternity’

Concept	Associations in Russian of Russian speakers	Associations in English of Russian speakers	Associations of English speakers (Kiss, Armstrong and Milroy, 1972)
<i>Вечность (eternity)</i>	Бесконечность (Infinity) (13), Жизнь (Life) (12), Вселенная (Universe) (11), Время (Time) (10), Бессмертие (Immortality) (6), Бог (God) (5), Мир (World) (4), Смерть (Death) (3), Будущее (Future) (3), Пустота (Emptiness) (2), Рай (Paradise) (2)	Space (12), Life (11), Universe (9), Time (9), Death (5), Love (4), God (4), Forever (3), World (2), Art (2), Enemy (2), Century (2), Endless (2), Enter (2), Paradise (2), Soul (2)	Ever (18), Infinity (9), Life (9), Death (7), Forever (6), Heaven (6), Hell (5), For ever (3), God (3), Always (2), Length (2), Now (2), Ring (2), Space (2), Universe (2)

It is clear that the associative fields of Russian students of English changed as their studies of English progressed. In the first table, we can see that the primary association of the word *Вера* was ‘hope’ and that became ‘God’ when asked again later in their studies. However, these tables show

that Russian students of English do not adopt the associations of English speakers as they become increasingly immersed in the English language. Instead, they maintain the Russian associations by and large and simply translate them into English when asked for the association in English. One might infer from such very limited lexical association analyses that the linguistic consciousness in the Moscow school sense of the term can certainly modify over time but exposure to a foreign language and culture does not result entirely in one thinking like a native speaker of the target language.

Conclusion

As Sweetser [46] states: 'it should not be a controversial claim that relationships between linguistic form and function reflect human conceptual structure and general principles of cognitive organisation'. She goes on to remind us that in order to understand metaphor, we must give up old prejudices. We can no longer insist on a single relationship between word and world. The real picture is much more complicated than this, and thus lexical associations are most useful when partnered with results from linguistic ethnography and its findings on pragmatically conditioned meanings. The evidence of how culture permeates the grammatical structure of language, and not just the lexicon, is ample and presented in studies such as the ones on honorific inflection and agreement in Japanese [47, 48], noun classes and categorization of nouns [49], extensive differences in grammar of men's and women's speech [50], to mention but a few. Language requires concurrent ethnographic research. By widening the scope of the research paradigm to include an ethnography of speaking and a phenomenology of speech that looks at discourse schemas, use of pronouns, paralinguistic features, ways of speaking etc., we do not in our opinion lose the systemic presentations of lexico-semantic categories. We will end up with a research paradigm much richer in terms of lexico-pragmatic implications.

Characterised by its Vygotskyian Neohumboldtian comparative semantics pedigree, the Moscow school of linguistics places a great emphasis on culture as a source of conceptualizing experience through cognitive structures such as word associations. It uses natural language semantics as a cognitive approach to meaning and shows how cognition is structured. The Moscow school does not subscribe to a monolithic and essentialised notion of culture, but equally it starts from the point that cultural differences exist and thus it is legitimate to investigate how these are encoded in language using empirical means. With an objective of facilitating intercultural communication, it promotes analytical tools based on lexical association to understand these cultural differences better. It does not employ an abstract notion of culture, but instead speaks of cultural conceptualisations. The Moscow school now intends to go beyond the lexicon and examine cultural con-

ceptualisation at all the grammatical levels of language. One weakness with the lexical approach is that languages represent ‘archives of conceptualisation’ [51] that may have been active at some stage in the collective cultural cognition. As mentioned earlier, the mapping of language (lexical association) to culture is more complicated than one might infer from looking at the association data. Speakers should not be seen as ‘imprisoned’ in their languages; an individual’s lexical associations will reflect a rich tapestry of a multitude of cultural and social influences. One should therefore be cautious in drawing conclusions from lexical association data alone.

With the appeal of the Natural Semantic Metalanguage approach in particular, there has been of late a revival in the interest of cultural semantics. As more linguists question generative theories of language, we would expect this interest to accelerate and to embrace the semantic association tools that the Moscow school has developed. By engaging with ethnographic data, speech acts and by developing more of an ethnopragmatic approach that examines the diversity of speech practices and shows how both syntax and morphology encode grammar, the Moscow school should be well positioned to continue to reap the dividends of the recent interest in the language culture interface. As ethnography begins to team up with the use of digital data and Smartphone dictionary apps., our resources should become at some point in the future far more comprehensive than they ever have been before. Attempts to disentangle the language, culture, consciousness nexus from lexical associations based on Big Data analytics might be one of the beneficiaries of these developments.

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**ЯЗЫК, СОЗНАНИЕ И КУЛЬТУРА: НЕКОТОРЫЕ ПРЕДЛОЖЕНИЯ
ДЛЯ ДАЛЬНЕЙШЕГО РАЗВИТИЯ МОСКОВСКОЙ ШКОЛЫ
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Аннотация. Статья представляет собой попытку осмысления истоков, современного состояния и перспектив развития московской психолингвистической школы через призму международной традиции изучения взаимосвязи языка, сознания и культуры. Московская психолингвистическая школа работает в рамках прикладных подходов, которые можно назвать нео-гумбольдтианскими, а точнее, на основе подходов, сформулированных в теоретическом наследии Л.С. Выготского, рассматривающих проблему роли языка в когнитивном и культурном опыте народов. Традиционно московская школа изучает феномен межкультурного общения с помощью ассоциативных экспериментов, выявляющих системные и символические лексические связи, отражающие этнокультурную специфику языкового сознания того или иного народа. В течение нескольких десятилетий российские психолингвисты детально изучают этнокультурную специфику языкового сознания, сопоставляя данные кросс-культурных исследований, полученных путем свободного ассоциативного эксперимента. Перспективной целью данных исследований является оптимизация межкультурного общения, а также, что не менее важно, более глубокое понимание специфики других культур. Как представляется, современные процессы глобализации, размывание культурных границ, а также неограниченные возможности исследований с использованием больших данных (Big Data) и самой парадигмы культурной семантики создали условия для движения вперед. Необходимо наметить новые направления исследований в рамках перспективного подхода с позиций культурной семантики. Следует уделить особое внимание таким ключевым понятиям, как «образ мира», и рассматривать его как обозначающее постоянно развивающееся культурное сознание, отражающее различное восприятие мира народами. По мнению авторов, на фоне снижения интереса к генеративным лингвистическим теориям, следует ожидать роста интереса к культурной семантике, что расширит возможности применения разработанных российской психолингвистикой ассоциативных методик как инструмента изучения языкового сознания и его специфики. Будущее научных исследований в этой области за многоаспектностью и междисциплинарностью. Перспективным представляется обращение к этнопрагматике, изучающей этнокультурную специфику речевых актов, особенности синтаксиса и морфологии различных грамматических систем. В этом контексте очевидна роль московской психолингвистической школы с ее интересом к вопросам взаимосвязи языка и культуры. Исследовательский арсенал современных ученых пополняется новыми инструментами, позволяющими оперировать большими данными (Big Data). Сегодня и в лингвистике необходимо применять масштабные комплексные подходы. Они, возможно, помогут разобраться в сложном взаимодействии и взаимовлиянии языка, культуры и сознания, так как позволят соединить результаты ассоциативных экспериментов и анализ больших данных.

Ключевые слова: язык; культура; сознание; российская психолингвистика; культурно обусловленный менталитет.

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