

MEDIUM-TERM DYNAMICS OF THE NAIVE PICTURE OF THE WORLD THROUGH THE PRISM OF ASSOCIATIVE EXPERIMENT

Morel Morel D.A.

Belgorod National Research University, Belgorod city, Belgorod region, Russia

The article shows that the changes of associative fields in diachrony somewhat schematically, but quite accurately reflect the dynamics of corresponding fragments of the naïve picture of the world. The undertaken comparative analysis of the associative fields of some stimuli representing “security perimeter” concept as of 1988–1997 (the data of “Russian associative dictionary”) and 2013–2014 (the results of the author’s experiment) revealed both some structural differences and more pronounced changes in relevance of a number of components and separate representatives of the fields under study.

Keywords: associative experiment, association, associative field, dynamics of a concept, diachrony, naïve picture of the world.

Prescientific, “genre”, “naïve” nature of the language picture of the world is traditionally mentioned by many researchers (e.g.: [2: 65–72; 6: 54; 3]): “the language reflects the naïve picture of the world, which develops as a response to mostly practical needs of a human, as the necessary cognitive basis of his adaptation to the world” [2: 68].

The first tier of such a picture is built to a great extent by constituents of the reflexive concept “security perimeter” (q.v.: [4]): “The fragment of the naïve picture of the world is built not chaotically but in accordance with the importance of designata themselves for the language community and in full compliance with the anthropocentric principle of the language... Towards the surrounding world, the closest area is the home of a person and his way of life. This is the sphere the most concretized and worked out in the language, covering everything that is “security perimeter” (A. Leroi-Gourhan) and gives life to the people” [3: 20].

One of the significant tools of studying the naïve picture of the world is an experiment: “An experiment is considered by right as a technique that can

be applicable to a large number of different studies, for associative reactions are somewhat like the concentration of entities, which are used by subjects to show how they understand the word that stands for... The whole complex of meanings of the word is somewhat like penetrated with associative rays linking both aspects of a single meaning, and aspects of different meanings, somehow related to the word-stimulus. Every movement of human thought involves associative links. We consider stereotyped associative reactions as more or less typical not only for a certain group of subjects, but also for the language group as a whole” [2: 152].

The data of an associative experiment can be consolidated in the form of an associative dictionary which is a unique research tool [7: 5–7] helping to describe collective “ordinary” consciousness of native speakers, public “mental climate” [8: 5].

It should be noted in this regard that “the interest in the study of the dynamics of language consciousness on the material of comparative analysis of the associative fields differing in the time of fixation has grown nowadays” [1: 15].

The reason for undertaking the present study was an observation made by the author while processing the results of a complex, multiaspect study of the current state of the fragment of the naïve picture of the world which represents drinks. The built associative field significantly differs in its composition from the data presented in the “Russian associative dictionary” (“RAD”), and it resembles in structure similar French and English associative fields [9].

Taking into consideration that “RAD” data acquisition was carried out at the end of the last century (1988–1997) [7: 3–4], and all respondents grew in the realities of the Soviet system, we suggested that the revealed differences of the associative field in its composition and structure reflect the dynamics of the considered fragment of the naïve picture of the world.

To corroborate the suggested hypothesis we decided to compare the state of associative fields of the same stimuli at two stages: the above-mentioned one and the current term. Stimuli representing “security perimeter” constituents were chosen: ‘dom’ (house or home), ‘odezhda’ (clothes), ‘posuda’ (utensils).

To obtain the necessary validity we tried to match best our experimentation methodology to the one described in “RAD” [ibid]. Subjects aged 17 to 25 were shown the questionnaire containing one hundred words-stimuli (including the chosen ones) and were asked to write down the only one, first reaction to each stimulus. They were given 10 minutes to fill in the questionnaire. During the experiment held in 2013–2014 100 students of Belgorod universities were interviewed. They are Belgorod region residents as well as non-residents (9 regions of Russia being presented).

Thus, the present study covers the period from 1988 to 2014 and embraces—in diachrony—rather a large fragment of the Russian naïve picture of the world. Associative fields of chosen stimuli are the subject of the study which material consists of the results of free associative experiments, reflecting the state of the mentioned fields as of the first

(1988–1997) and the second (2013) stages of the period under consideration.

Next follows the overview of obtained results.

1. At the both stages *prototypical* ‘dom’ is rather *home* then house (percentage of tokens given in brackets):

– at the 1st stage it is native (11.5), big (3.9) and respondents’ own (3.9);

– at the 2nd stage it is related to the ideas of cosiness (8+5), family (8+4), and safety (4+4); it is big (4) but referred to as a flat (5).

Clusters distribution (total percentage of tokens / percentage of reactions):

– at the 1st stage: it is native or related to the native land (12.5 / 2.9); it has a specific location (11.5 / 11.6); it is a specific kind of dwelling (9.6 / 10.1) or has a particular purpose (5.0 / 7.2); it is made from a specific material (6.7 / 7.2) and big in size (5.9 / 4.3); it is to be lived in (5.9 / 5.8) and to be built (5.8 / 7.2); it is synecdochically referred to as its part (4.9 / 5.8);

– at the 2nd stage: it is related to the family (16 / 8.2) and warm feelings (4 / 8.2), to the cosiness (13 / 4.1), warmth (6 / 4.1), and rest (5 / 4.1); it is a safe, secure place (11 / 8.2); it is native or related to the native land (8 / 8.2); it is synecdochically referred to as its part (8 / 6.1); it is represented by a specific kind of dwelling (5 / 10.2); it is big in size (5 / 4.1); it has a specific location (3 / 6.1).

Clusters dynamics (increment rate of total percentage of tokens):

– the perception of a house as the heart of “security perimeter” (see: [5])—a cosy (+12), secure (+4.5), warm (+1.41) place related to the family (+4.52), warm feelings (+3), and rest—has dominated respondents’ language consciousness;

– location of a house as well as its relation to the native land have lost their relevance (-0.74 and -0.36, respectively);

– relevance (as well as assortment) of specific representatives of dwellings has also decreased (-0.58);

– verbal reactions manifesting the activity approach are getting out of use (-0.85);

– material a house is made from is of little importance now (-0.70).

2. *Prototypical clothes* (percentage of tokens given in brackets):

– at the 1st stage they are beautiful (6.9), fashionable (5.9), good (4.0); an overcoat (4.0) is thought (chiefly by female respondents) to be one of typical garments;

– at the 2nd stage they are comfortable (7; chiefly for women), related to the warmth (7) or warm themselves (4); they are referred to as jeans (5) or trousers (4+2; two Russian synonyms), male respondents also consider a jacket (4) to be one of typical garments.

Clusters distribution (total percentage of tokens / percentage of reactions):

– at the 1st stage: clothes are appreciated positively (33.7 / 26.9), chiefly as stylish (12.9 / 10.4), but they can be also defined disapprovingly (21.8 / 20.9), mainly as worn-out (9.0 / 9.9); clothes can be represented by a specific type of wear (11.9 / 11.9) or a specific item (10.9 / 9.0);

– at the 2nd stage: clothes are chiefly represented by a specific item (38 / 37.0) or sometimes referred to as a specific type of wear (8 / 11.1); they are closely associated with the idea of comfort (12 / 7.4) and warmth (11 / 3.7); they are related to the fashion (8 / 11.1).

Clusters dynamics (increment rate of total percentage of tokens):

– any assessments of clothes (both positive and negative) have lost their relevance completely (-0.93) (the share of their representatives has also fallen from 47.8% to 5.6%);

– clothes start to be mostly referred to as a specific item (+2.49), the range of mentioned garments has become much wider (the share of such reactions has increased drastically from 9.0% to 37.0%);

– the idea of comfort and warmth has arisen in respondents' language consciousness with regard to clothes (+6.67);

– the relation to the fashion has not become more relevant but got more representatives.

The slump in the relevance of adjectives should also be noted. The shares of adjectival reactions and tokens have nearly halved: from 38.8% to 16.7%, and from 41.6% to 21% (-0.50), respectively.

3. *Prototypical utensil* (percentage of tokens given in brackets):

– at the 1st stage it is breakable (8.7) or broken (6.7) and porcelain (4.8 (noun) + 4.8 (adjective)); female respondents also consider it to be dirty (6.7) or clean (4.8);

– at the 2nd stage it is a dish (10), it could be clean (9; chiefly for women) or dirty (7; chiefly for men) and it needs to be washed up (7).

Clusters distribution (total percentage of tokens / percentage of reactions):

– at the 1st stage: utensil can break (28.8 / 18.5); it is made from a specific material (18.3 / 16.7; chiefly different kinds of ceramics); it is represented by a specific object or a group of objects (10.8 / 16.7; chiefly tableware); it is dirty (9.6 / 3.7), so it needs to be washed up (2.9 / 3.7) in order to get clean (6.7 / 5.6); it is related to the kitchen (6.7 / 9.3) and food (5.8 / 5.6);

– at the 2nd stage: utensils are represented by a specific object or a group of objects (29 / 23.9; chiefly tableware, dishes are the most frequently mentioned); you need to wash up (12 / 6.5) with specific artifacts (4 / 8.7) in order to make dirty utensils (8 / 4.3) clean (10 / 4.3); utensil can break (9 / 13.0); it is made from a specific material (7 / 10.9; chiefly different kinds of glass); it is related to the food (6 / 2.3) and kitchen (2 / 2.3).

Clusters dynamics (increment rate of total percentage of tokens):

– a utensil starts to be mostly referred to as a specific object (+1.69), chiefly a dish (+2.91);

– respondents got focused on washing up (+3.14), at the same time the cleanness assessment has become a little more relevant and lost gender specificity, and a subcluster of different cleaning artifacts has emerged;

– the idea of fragility and the relevance of material have declined (-0.69 and -0.62, respectively);

– a utensil has lost correlation with the kitchen (-0.70).

The undertaken study lets us draw the following conclusions.

1. Comparing data of associative experiments held at different times provides us with plenty of material for in-depth analysis of dynamics of a specific fragment of the naïve picture of the world, as well as of ordinary consciousness of representatives of the language community in diachrony within the corresponding period of time.

The changes in relevancy of associative field's semantic clusters and single associative reactions correlate with changes in the structure of the concept: emergence / oblivion of cognitive characters, their shifts along the "core – periphery" axis, changes in configurations of internal and external system relations. The advantage of using this method is the possibility of evaluating changes in the significance of each concept structure component, and the ability to reveal the short-term dynamics of concepts, where the involvement of other methods is of little efficiency due to the inertness of the language system.

2. The undertaken comparison of the selected associative fields allowed to reveal distinctively the changes that affected the relevant concepts over the past, so eventful quarter of century, overcharged with social, economic, political and ideological impacts. The revealed changes cover the entire structure of the concepts.

In relation to the associative fields under study a number of changes is revealed in structural and functional (change in the relevance of different concept constituents) aspects.

If we consider selected concepts as frames, the following general trend is traced. If the total number of slots is roughly stable, their means of representation have grown scanty. The number of verbal and adjectival (mainly evaluative and categorizing) reactions has decreased, thus the picture of the world of contemporary respondents becomes less coherent

due to the weakening of the relationship between its nodes. There is also a tendency to reduce the diversity of the world only to the world of artifacts.

All this allows to draw an alarming conclusion: the revision of life position towards passive, somewhat childish, consumer attitude to life has systematically, deeply affected the picture of the world of contemporary respondents.

We should also mention the arisen affective fixation on the idea of comfort and warmth.

The perception of the prototypical class representatives has undergone even more dramatic alterations. Unlike dynamics of fields' semantic clusters, these changes are likely in the plane of revealed sets of characteristics, rather than their relevance.

3. Summarizing the above-stated, we are to note that the suggested hypothesis is fully confirmed. Changes of an associative field in diachrony somewhat schematically, but quite accurately reflect the dynamics of the corresponding concept in the naïve picture of the world.

References

1. Алимущкина О.А. Возможности изучения стереотипов в ассоциативных полях // Альманах современной науки и образования. 2010. № 2 (33); Ч. II. С. 14–15.
2. Маслова В.А. Лингвокультурология. М.: Академия, 2001. 208 с.
3. Михайлова О.А. Ограничения в лексической семантике русского слова: автореф. дис. ... д-ра филол. наук. Екатеринбург, 1998. 30 с.
4. Морель Морель Д.А. Междисциплинарный характер концепта «периметр безопасности» // Язык и ментальность: сб. ст. / Отв. ред. М.В. Пименова. СПб.: СПбГУ, 2010. С. 459–463.
5. Морель Морель Д.А., Зубкова К.В. К вопросу о средствах репрезентации рефлексивного концепта «ПЕРИМЕТР БЕЗОПАСНОСТИ» (сопоставительный аспект исследования) // Альманах современной науки и образования. 2008. № 2 (9); Ч. II. С. 101–106.

6. Попова З.Д., Стернин И.А. Когнитивная лингвистика. М.: АСТ; Восток–Запад, 2007. 314 с.
7. Русский ассоциативный словарь / Ю.Н. Караулов [и др.]; в 2 т. М.: Астрель; АСТ, 2002. Т. 1. 784 с.
8. Уфимцева Н. В. Введение // Французский ассоциативный словарь; в 2-х т. Новосибирск: НГУ, 2010. Т. 1. С. 3–13.
9. Morel Morel D. A. Multiaspect approach to the study of a fragment of the picture of the world // Applied and Fundamental Studies: Proceedings of the 3rd International Academic Conference. August 30–31, 2013. – St. Louis, Missouri: Publishing House “Science and Innovation Center”, 2013. P. 363–368.

СРЕДНЕСРОЧНАЯ ДИНАМИКА НАИВНОЙ КАРТИНЫ МИРА СКВОЗЬ ПРИЗМУ АССОЦИАТИВНОГО ЭКСПЕРИМЕНТА

Морель Морель Д.А.

Белгородский государственный национальный исследовательский университет.
Белгород, Белгородская область, Россия

В статье показано, что изменения ассоциативных полей в диахронии несколько схематично, но достаточно точно отражают динамику соответствующих фрагментов наивной картины мира. Проведенный сопоставительный анализ ассоциативных полей ряда стимулов, репрезентирующих концепт «периметр безопасности», выявил их структурные и более выраженные функциональные отличия по состоянию на 1988–1997 гг. (данные «Русского ассоциативного словаря») и на 2013–2014 гг. (данные авторского эксперимента).

Ключевые слова: ассоциативный эксперимент; ассоциация; ассоциативное поле; динамика концепта; диахрония; наивная картина мира.