

Dynamic processes in the linguistic consciousness of Russian students (on the example of ethnic stereotypes)

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Abstract - In order to identify the possible dynamics of ethnic stereotypes in the linguistic consciousness of Russian students, the associative potential of the ethnonyms included as incentives in the Russian Associative Dictionary, edited by Yu.N. Karaulov, as well as data from the free-associative experiment conducted in 2018-2019 among students of various universities of St. Petersburg (Herzen State Pedagogical University of Russia, Saint-Petersburg Mining University, Peter the Great St. Petersburg Polytechnic University). The obtained data testify both to certain stability of the nuclear zones of the associative fields of ethnonyms, and to significant changes in the linguistic consciousness of Russian students over the past 30 years. The revealed differences reflect both world processes, as well as political, ideological, and economic changes in the life of Russian society, which were manifested in the content of the main directions of association of ethnonyms and in the change in the nature of their assessment.

Keywords - *ethnic stereotype, ethnonym, linguistic consciousness, associative potential of ethnonym, associative verbal field, direction of association, dynamic processes in linguistic consciousness.*

I. INTRODUCTION

The phenomenon of ethnic stereotype, which goes back to the concept of social stereotype introduced by U. Lippmann [1], is currently being actively studied by anthropologists, psychologists, sociologists, cultural scientists, linguists, and psycholinguists, who offer various ways of its research and objectification. It seems natural that scientists use different approaches and methods, and also develop many aspects of the content of ethnic stereotype. However, this broad interdisciplinary research field still contains many gaps and unresolved issues, including the possibilities of studying the dynamics of ethnic presentations.

Among the most common are direct polling methods that imply "attribution of qualities" to one or another ethnos; the percentage method of J. Brayem [2]; use of "bipolar scales" and "diagnostic coefficient" [3]. Ethnopsychologists refer to opened descriptions, i.e. verbal "portraits" of typical representatives of one or another ethnos, as well as methods of using the "semantic differential" [4].

Currently, the linguistic aspect of studying ethnic stereotypes is being actively developed. Different categories

of linguistic units are analyzed: words containing in their meanings an assessment of the properties of a typical representative of another ethnic group, attributive, genetic phrases, comparative turns, idioms, proverbs and sayings, including ethnonyms [5]. The content of ethnic stereotypes is reconstructed according to the texts of ethnic jokes [6], and also on the basis of an analysis of the semantic potential of ethnonyms [7].

Within the framework of the psycholinguistic direction, in the study of ethnic stereotypes, an appeal to the linguistic consciousness of native speakers, which is a language-mediated image of the world of a given culture, i.e. "A set of perceptual, conceptual and procedural knowledge of the carrier of culture about the objects of the real world" [8]. At the same time, "for observation and study, linguistic consciousness becomes accessible through mediation by the sign of a language in the form of a separate word, phrase, associative field, text". Thus, the knowledge obtained in the process of socialization within a certain culture expressed with the help of language — that is, the linguistic picture of speakers of a language/culture [9, 10] can be studied. According to the general opinion of linguists, it is an associative experiment allowing identify and interpret human and culturally marked knowledge stored in the everyday consciousness of native speakers and reflected in the associative meanings of words of the national language [11, 12]. It is with the help of an associative experiment that it is possible to reveal not only the systematic image of the world of a particular culture, but also the systematic character of the very image of consciousness that is behind the word, i.e. consistency of the knowledge that a particular culture transmits to all its members through value (in the psychological sense) [13].

Due to the extremely active economic, social, political and other changes taking place in the modern world, it is the diachronic aspect of the study of linguistic consciousness that is especially relevant. Since the ethnic stereotype containing stable, generalized, simplified, emotionally evaluative ideas about the moral, mental, physical qualities of representatives of one or another ethnic group [14, 15] is captured in the everyday consciousness of a native speaker and is able to be studied through his verbal representations. The purpose of this article is a description and discussion of the results of the study of the possible dynamics of ethnic

heterostereotypes (images of representatives of other ethnic groups or images of “alien”) in the linguistic consciousness of native speakers of Russia.

II. MATERIALS AND METHODS (MODEL)

Objective material for the study of everyday linguistic consciousness, including ethnic stereotypes, is contained in the Russian Associative Dictionary (RAD), edited by Yu.N. Karaulov [16], who is a model of the associative thesaurus in Russian lexicography. Since the experiment underlying the dictionary was conducted in the last quarter of the twentieth century, it is relevant to identify possible dynamic processes that have occurred in the linguistic consciousness native speakers of Russia over the past 30 years.

The overall selection of incentives for the experiment was carried out by the compilers of the RAD on the basis of specially developed criteria. Initially, 200 stimulus words were included in the “Dictionary of the associative norms of the Russian language” edited by A.A. Leontiev, further this list was selectively supplemented with lexical units from the first thousand of the most frequent words in the texts according to the “Frequency Dictionary of the Russian Language” edited by L.N. Zazorina. The resulting list was expanded to include several dozens of descriptor words reflecting the vital or typical concepts of Russian culture from “Russian Semantic Dictionary” edited by S.G. Barkhudarov. Further, for some words of different parts of speech from this list, synonymous rows were developed, and antonymic pairs were selected, which are also included in the composition of the impetuses. For a number of words, an inflectional paradigm was formed from the resulting composition of stimuli, with the word forms that were added to the list. Specific pairs were also formed for some verbs. Finally, the resulting list was subjected to control in terms of systemic completeness [17]. As a result, only 34 ethnically marked impetuses included into the RAD (i.e., those in the associative field which contain stereotypical ideas about a particular ethnic group): the ethnonyms proper (Georgian, Jewish, Jew, Cossack, German, Ukrainian, Russian, Tatar, Gipsy); adjectives (American, English, Bulgarian, Brazilian, Dutch, Greek, Georgian, Danish, Indian, Chinese, German, Turkish, Ukrainian, Finnish, French, Japanese); country names (America, Belarus, Greece, Italy, Kievan Rus, Russia, USA, France, Japan).

Although the study of ethnic stereotypes is possible with the use of the names of adjectives and country names, in the associative fields of which there are reactions that convey the respondents attitudes towards certain ethnic groups and their representatives (which was partially carried out in our previous work on the stereotypes “French” and “German” [18]), the subject of this article is the associative potential of the ethnonyms proper, recorded in the materials of the RAD, since, according to the researchers, it is the ethnonym that represents is the name of the nation, is an essential component and a key means of language representation of the category of ethnicity [19]. Thus, the research subject was 8 lexemes-incentives, reflecting hetero stereotype representations of Russian students (Georgian, Jewish, Jew, Cossack, German, Ukrainian, Tatar, Gipsy). It is significant that this list contains 2 ethnonyms (Jew and Ukrainian), which are commonly called exonyms, expressive

ethnonyms, “descending” ethnonyms [20], which reflect animosity towards representatives of a given people. Such names refer to the so-called “disturbing vocabulary”, in the meanings of which a naive, as a rule, negative, stereotypical idea of a particular ethnic group is enshrined [21]. Unfortunately, many significant ethnonyms, for example, American, French, Pole, and many others, were not included in the dictionary materials.

TABLE I. NUMBER OF REACTIONS TO STIMULUS-ETHNONYMS, FIXED IN RAD

| Stimulus-ethnonym | Total reactions to stimulus | Total number of different reactions to the stimulus | Number of single reactions to stimulus | Number of failures |
|-------------------|-----------------------------|---|--|--------------------|
| Georgian | 104 | 65 | 53 | 0 |
| Jewish | 105 | 65 | 52 | 3 |
| Jew | 101 | 46 | 33 | 4 |
| Cossack | 103 | 62 | 43 | 0 |
| German | 106 | 55 | 40 | 2 |
| Tatar | 102 | 68 | 57 | 2 |
| Ukrainian | 103 | 46 | 35 | 2 |
| Gipsy | 102 | 52 | 34 | 0 |

A free-associative experiment was conducted in St. Petersburg using the method developed for RAD by Yu.N. Karaulov. The same social group took part in the experiment - Russian students (230 people) aged 17-25, for whom Russian is the native language. As in the experiment presented in the RAD, representatives of various fields of knowledge participated, we also attracted students from different specialties: philology department of the Herzen State Pedagogical University of Russia (120 people), economics department of Saint-Petersburg Mining University (60 people), of Peter the Great St. Petersburg Polytechnic University (50 people). Due to the fact that students from different regions of Russia study at St. Petersburg universities, the experiment did not have a limited regional character. All students were offered a questionnaire containing 8 stimulus-ethnonyms that fell into the RAD. Students were required to write against each stimulus, the first response they had caused by this stimulus.

TABLE II. NUMBER OF REACTIONS RECEIVED FOR STIMULUS-ETHNONYMS IN MODERN EXPERIMENT

| Stimulus-ethnonym | Total reactions to stimulus | Total number of different reactions to the stimulus | Number of single reactions to stimulus | Number of failures |
|-------------------|-----------------------------|---|--|--------------------|
| Georgian | 230 | 84 | 73 | 0 |
| Jewish | 230 | 62 | 50 | 0 |
| Jew | 228 | 40 | 32 | 2 |
| Cossack | 230 | 78 | 65 | 0 |
| German | 230 | 95 | 85 | 0 |
| Tatar | 230 | 80 | 71 | 0 |

| Stimulus-ethnonym | Total reactions to stimulus | Total number of different reactions to the stimulus | Number of single reactions to stimulus | Number of failures |
|-------------------|-----------------------------|---|--|--------------------|
| Ukrainian | 230 | 64 | 51 | 0 |
| Gipsy | 230 | 63 | 56 | 0 |

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

At the first stage of processing the results, a quantitative analysis allowed us to isolate the nuclear part of the associative fields, consisting of the most frequent and repetitive responses of the respondents. Nuclear associations are listed in order of their frequency.

TABLE III. NUCLEAR ASSOCIATIVE POTENTIAL OF ETHNONYMS

| Stimulus-ethnonym | RAD | Modern experiment |
|-------------------|--|---|
| Georgian | black, wog, nose, Armenian, nationality, gook, rich, market, accent, ethnic man, man | accent, wine, nose, dance, tea, mountains, delicious food, khachapuri (Georgian cheese-pie), hospitality, songs, sing |
| Jewish | nationality, Israel, man, kike, cunning, intelligent, nation, persecuted, greedy, nose, man too | Israel, Dead Sea, persecution, greedy, emigration, hard work, Holocaust, Mossad, circumcision, smart, orthodox, Synagogue |
| Jew | Jewish, greedy, money grubber, creep, liquid, miser, stingy, fat | Jewish, eternal, greedy, Israel, sidelocks, persecution, smart, emigration |
| Cossack | Don, young, chieftain, daring, saber, Kuban, dashing, horse, papakha (sheepskin hat), warrior, free, walks, fool | saber, Don, mustache, horse, hat, chieftain, steppe, farm, daring, brave, boldness, Taras Bulba |
| German | fascist, Russian, foreigner, war, Germany, nationality, French, fritz | beer, Berlin, order, accuracy, BMW, Merkel, Mercedes, sausage, fascist, chancellor |
| Tatar | nationality, landowner, Russian, man, wog, Bashkir, enemy, guest, yoke | nationality, Kazan, Muslim, Tugarin snake, Crimean, uninvited guest worse than Tatar, yoke, mosque |
| Ukrainian | Ukraine, fat, Ukrainian, nationality, Russian, scalp-lock | Ukraine, Ukrainian, lard, borscht, Taras Bulba, embroidered shirt, "Ukraine is Europe", scalp-lock, gas, Maidan, sunflower seeds, "Glory to Ukraine! Glory to heroes!?" |
| Gipsy | fortune teller, Aza, guessing, thief, fortune telling, guessing, deception, camp, dance, gypsy, black, tambourine, cards, cheat, with cards, bitch, hooligan | cheating, cards, fortune teller, camp, Moldavian, dirty, dancing |

A direct comparison of associative fields does not allow obtain significant results according to Yu.N. Karaulov. He has put forward the idea of using the "semantic gestalt", which reflects the internal semantic organization of the associative field, correlating its structure with the structure of reality reflected in it. The semantic gestalt is usually

composed of several zones (their number varies within 7 +/- 2, which combine typical features of a given language consciousness for an object or concept corresponding to a field name (=stimulus) [22]. Researchers note that associative gestalt is detected, when associates semantically to certain characteristics, grouping naturally around several (as a rule, frequency in an associative article) reactions, which denote, they call a certain set of mental artifacts concept images [23].

At the second stage, the content of the associative fields of ethnonyms allowed us to identify the main directions of their association, allowing rank the knowledge of speakers of the Russian language about the representatives of ethnic groups, as well as attitudes towards them:

- appearance;
- character and mentality;
- lifestyle (kitchen, clothes, traditions);
- confessional characteristics;
- historical context;
- political context;
- geographic context;
- derogatory names in a minimized form transferring a negative attitude towards the representatives of the ethnic group.

In analyzing the directions of association, logical associations reflecting the nuclear denotative semes of an ethnonym (for example, the reactions "nationality", "ethnos", etc.) were not taken into account.

At the third stage, based on selected areas of association, according to the RAD, the nuclear zones of the associative fields of the above ethnonyms were analyzed.

TABLE IV. APPEARANCE

| Stimulus-ethnonym | RAD | Modern experiment |
|-------------------|---------------------|-------------------|
| Georgian | black, nose, accent | nose, accent |
| Jewish | nose | - |
| Jew | fat | side-locks |
| Cossack | young | mustache |
| German | - | - |
| Tatar | - | - |
| Ukrainian | scalp-lock | scalp-lock |
| Gipsy | black | dirty |

TABLE V. CHARACTER, MENTALITY

| Stimulus-ethnonym | RAD | Modern experiment |
|-------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------------|
| Georgian | - | hospitality, songs, sings |
| Jewish | cunning, smart, greedy | greedy, industrious, smart |
| Jew | greedy, miser, stinly | greedy, smart |
| Cossack | daring, dashing, free, fool | daring, brave |

| Stimulus-ethnonym | RAD | Modern experiment |
|-------------------|----------------------------------|-------------------|
| German | - | order, accuracy |
| Tatar | landowner | - |
| Ukrainian | - | - |
| Gipsy | thief, cheating, cheat, hooligan | cheat |

TABLE VI. LIFESTYLE

| Stimulus-ethnonym | RAD | Modern experiment |
|-------------------|---|--|
| Georgian | rich, market | wine, dance, tea, delicious food, khachapuri (Georgian cheese-pie), hospitality, songs, sing |
| Jewish | persecuted | persecution, emigration |
| Jew | - | persecution, emigration |
| Cossack | chieftain, saber, horse, sheepskin hat, warrior, walks | saber, horse, hat, chieftain, farm |
| German | - | beer, BMW, Mercedes, sausage |
| Tatar | - | - |
| Ukrainian | lard | lard, borscht, embroidery shirt, gas, sunflower seeds |
| Gipsy | guessing, thief, camp, dance, tambourine, cards, with cards | cards, fortuneteller, camp, dancing |

CONFESSIONAL CHARACTERISTICS

In the RAD, there are no reactions associated with the confessional characteristics of the ethnos in the core of the associative potential of ethnonyms.

In our experiment, similar reactions were recorded to the following stimuli: *Jewish* (circumcision, orthodox, synagogue); *Tatar* (Muslim, mosque).

TABLE VII. HISTORICAL CONTEXT

| Stimulus-ethnonym | RAD | Modern experiment |
|-------------------|---------------------|-------------------|
| Georgian | - | - |
| Jewish | - | Holocaust |
| Jew | - | - |
| Cossack | - | - |
| German | fascist, war, fritz | fascist |
| Tatar | enemy, yoke | yoke |
| Ukrainian | - | Taras Bulba |
| Gipsy | - | - |

POLITICAL CONTEXT

The RAD in the associative core of ethnonyms has not recorded any reactions related to the political context.

In our experiment, such reactions to the following ethnonyms were recorded: *Jewish* (Mossad); *German*

(Merkel, Chancellor); *Ukrainian* (Maidan, “Ukraine is Europe, Glory to Ukraine! Glory to the Heroes!”).

TABLE VIII. GEOGRAPHIC CONTEXT

| Stimulus-ethnonym | RAD | Modern experiment |
|-------------------|------------|-------------------|
| Georgian | - | mountains |
| Jewish | - | Israel, Dead Sea |
| Jew | - | - |
| Cossack | Don, Kuban | Don, steppe |
| German | - | - |
| Tatar | - | Kazan, Crimea |
| Ukrainian | - | Ukraine |
| Gipsy | - | - |

TABLE IX. DEROGATORY NAMES TRANSFERRING A NEGATIVE ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE REPRESENTATIVES OF ETHNIC GROUP

| Stimulus-ethnonym | RAD | Modern experiment |
|-------------------|-----------------------|-------------------|
| Georgian | wog, gook, ethnic man | - |
| Jewish | Jew | - |
| Jew | creep | - |
| Cossack | - | - |
| German | fritz | - |
| Tatar | wog | - |
| Ukrainian | - | - |
| Gipsy | bitch | - |

Comparison of the nuclear associative zones of ethnonyms took place in two directions: the main directions of association and evaluative content.

The main directions of the association recorded in the RAD:

- The most widely represented are the following areas of association of ethnonyms: *appearance, character and mentality, lifestyle, historical context, derogatory names transferring a negative attitude towards representatives of the ethnic group;*
- poorly represented or not at all represented: *confessional characteristics, political and geographical context.*

Modern experiment:

- Directions are widely represented: *appearance, character traits and mentality, lifestyle;*
- significantly weakened *historical context;*
- *derogatory names that transmit a negative attitude towards representatives of the ethnic group* have completely disappeared;
- Directions appeared or intensified: *confessional characteristics, geographical and political context.*

The analysis of the estimated content demonstrated changes in the assessment of the associative potential of ethnonyms.

The total number of positive reactions in the nuclear associative zone of ethnonyms according to RAD data is 4, of which: Georgian (0), Jewish (1), Jew (0), Cossack (3), German (0), Tatar (0), Ukrainian (0), Gipsy (0).

The total number of positive reactions in the nuclear associative zone of ethnonyms according to the data of the modern experiment is 10, of which: Georgian (2), Jew (2), Jew (1), Cossack (3), German (2).

The total number of negative reactions in the nuclear zone of ethnonyms according to the RAD data is 20, of which: Georgian (0), Jewish (2), Jew (6), Cossack (1), German (3), Tatar (3), Ukrainian (0) Gipsy (5).

According to the data of the modern experiment, the total number of negative reactions in the nuclear zone of ethnonyms is 4, of which: Georgian (0), Jewish (1), Jew (1), Cossack (0), German (1), Tatar (0), Ukrainian (0), Gipsy (2).

In addition to general changes, there are differences in the associative potential of specific ethnonyms.

Georgian - all negative-evaluative reactions, as well as reactions, which are derogatory names that transferring a negative attitude towards the representatives of the ethnic group, have disappeared; increased direction associated with knowledge about the lifestyle of the ethnic group.

Jewish, Jew - weakened the direction associated with character traits and mentality, increased the number of reactions related to lifestyle, confessional characteristics, geographical and historical knowledge; decreased negative evaluations. It should be noted here that in the minds of modern students the ethnonym *Jew* lost contemptuous, abusive connotations and is consistently perceived in the first sense, namely: "the same as a Jewish", that is, passed from the category of negatively colored expressive ethnonyms and "descending" ethnonyms to the category of little-used names of representatives of the ethnic group.

Cossack - all directions of association were preserved, as well as overall positive assessment.

German - weakened the direction associated with the historical context, there were reactions associated with lifestyle, with the character and mentality of the ethnic group, with the political context.

Tatarin - weakened the direction associated with the historical context, there were reactions due to confessional characteristics and geographical context; negative evaluative reactions disappeared.

Ukrainian - the main directions of association have been preserved; a political context has emerged. It is important to note that the problems of a political nature did not affect the estimated content of the ethnonym, which in the minds of modern students did not acquire negative connotations but is perceived as a synonym for the *Ukrainian* lexeme.

Gipsy - all directions of association have been preserved, as well as significant negative evaluations.

Ethnonyms *Cossack* (with the prevailing positive estimation) and *Gipsy* (with the prevailing negative evaluation) turned out to be the most stable, retaining the meaningful orientation and character of the assessment.

The associative potential of the ethnonyms of Georgian (the loss of the negative and the acquisition of the generally positive assessment), as well as the ethnonyms Jewish, Jew, German, Tatar (weakening of the negative assessment), has significantly changed.

Substantial changes occurred in the associative field of the ethnonym *Ukrainian*.

IV. CONCLUSION

Comparison of the associative potential of ethnonyms with an interval of 30 years suggests that despite the sustainability of ethnic stereotypes asserted by researchers, the diachronic approach to their research allows us to record dynamic processes in the linguistic consciousness of native speakers.

The most striking manifestation of the dynamics is the change in the evaluation of the associative potential of ethnonyms. With the undifferentiated and predominantly negative-evaluative nature of heterostereotypes recognized by the researchers, the experimental results showed some strengthening of positive and fundamental weakening of pejorative characteristics (the total number of negative reactions in the nuclear associative zone of ethnonyms decreased four times, and the direction of associations representing derogatory names, in a minimized form transmitting negative attitudes towards representatives of that or another ethnos completely disappeared). It is possible to assume that the processes of globalization, unification, democratization weakened the rigidity of the "friend or foe" opposition, marking the specific mentality and linguistic consciousness of representatives of individualistic and collectivist cultures [24] and largely determining the assessment of heterostereotypes. The weakening of this opposition could cause a change in the assessment of ethnic stereotypes in the linguistic consciousness of modern Russian students.

Not only world processes, but also significant changes that have occurred in Russia over the past 30 years, could have affected the substantive areas of association of ethnonyms. The "openness" of the country has changed for Russian students the images of representatives of many ethnic groups. The students received specific knowledge about the features of everyday culture, national cuisine, lifestyle, traditions, and religious peculiarities of other countries, which supplanted the negative historically motivated context and negative evaluations in their minds. The emergence of human, personal connections clarified, concretized, greatly expanded, enriched the content of ethnic stereotypes in the minds of modern Russian students.

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