

# THE LANGUAGE AND HUMAN COGNITIVE ACTIVITY

*C. ph. s., Bezukladova I. Y.*

*Russia, the city of Tambov, Tambov State University after G. R. Derzhavin*

**Abstract.** *The article concerns the evolution of the scientific views of the cognition and language correlation, the cognitive and language structures from the classical epistemology and constructivism to the modern stage of the cognitive linguistics development. The research done in plane of the cognitive linguistics, psychology, neurophysiology, psychophysiology, cognitive linguistics and some other sciences show that the material structures of brain and physical processes running in it are available to observe and fixate only due to the language.*

*The main merit of the cognitive linguistics is studying the language as a means opening the way to the analysis of the cognitive human abilities as the only instrument providing an access to the human consciousness. The language is considered as a way of objectification of existing in our consciousness different and varied levels structures of the world knowledge. The linguists-cognitivists admit the key role of the human and the human factor in cognition processes. A great number of researches are devoted to studying mass and individual knowledge.*

*It is important to understand the cognition process both as a process of human interaction with the environment so as an inter-subjective process. The social dependency of human cognition allows us to speak about the socially generated sense and meaning that is determined by all cognitive human system. The definition of what is understood by knowledge has fundamentally changed: by knowledge in the cognitive linguistics plane we understand not the collection of accidental, separate facts but the set of data united into a definite structured system. Hence, we speak not about knowledge in general but about the knowledge represented in the language.*

**Keywords:** *objective knowledge, cognitive structures, language structures, cognitive linguistics.*

Studying the issue what is the objective knowledge and how the knowledge structures find their representation in the language structures which is one of the most topical questions of the cognitive linguistics requires a cross-subject approach.

The supporters of the classical epistemology single out three knowledge sources: the object in the focus of the cognitive interest, the subject with their cognitive abilities and the social conditions of cognition. From the point of view of the social epistemology all knowledge sources are social conditions of cognition: the subject and object of the cognitive process are social constructors; it is cognized only that what is a world part in a definite way developed by a man and only the way dictated by the social norms and rules. The idea of considering the cognition subject and object as social constructors is quite perspective at researching the interconnection of the language, cognition and communication. In the cognitive sociology plane D. Bloor has designed a conception of knowledge as a social institute according to which knowledge is what is accepted by people as knowledge; any knowledge has a social component, moreover, knowledge is a mass behavior [Bloor 1976].

The constructivism suggests a similar interpretation of the surrounding reality and individuality interconnection and in the scientific circles it has become topical the problem of activity constructing with the social factors taken into account. E. Glasersfeld emphasizes the fact that knowledge exists only in human mind and the thinking subject constructs it on the basis of their own experience. Knowledge is necessary for a living organism to order and structure the shapeless stream of the experienced [Glasersfeld 1981: 16]. One of the key postulates of E. Glasersfeld's theory is that one can consider knowledge not as a result but as an activity.

Formulating the basic principles of the radical constructivism taking into account the theory of cognitive development J. Piaget, E. Glasersfeld state that (1) knowledge is not simply passively accepted by the thinking subject but it is actively built; (2) the cognitive function is adaptive: cognition serves to organize the world comprehending but not to open the ontological reality. The researcher suggests a thesis that during the communication process it is impossible to base on the already existed knowledge, the communication orients inter-actants to construct meanings during the process of cognition [Glasersfeld 1997: 225-236]. The similar point of view on the cognitive process, knowledge as the result of this process and communication demonstrates the interconnection knowledge of the language, knowledge represented in the language and other types of knowledge the same as the social

interaction importance. This idea later was developed in the works of the cognitive psychologists and cognitive linguistics.

Great contribution into the development of the philosophic-methodological approaches to studying interconnection of cognition, culture and language formed in the second half of the 20 century was done by the structuralists' research. So, C. Levi-Strauss demonstrated in his works universal character of unconsciousness sphere functioning and its being independent on the national and time belonging, emphasizing that both the primitive and modern (scientific among them) systems of cognition are directed to order, system and classification of the incoming information [Levi-Strauss 2011].

Quite different idea of knowledge and cognitive process essence based on the idea of subjectivity is characteristic of post-modern philosophy: the very possibility of the objective truth existing is denied and they postulate the subjective character of the world perceiving and as the consequence the truth plurality. M. Foucault, for example, insists on impossibility to reconstruct consciousness continuum or continuum of sense: «The world is not an accomplice of our cognition and there is no pre-discourse foreseeing that would make it gracious to us» [Foucault 1996: 80].

Arguing with this point of view, J. Habermas suggests using instead of the classical theory of cognition the theory of communicative action according to which the truth is understood as the result of discourse and suggests the idea of the dynamic and contextually dependent character of cognition [Habermas 1995].

On the basis of the logical-philosophical language analysis R.I. Pavilionis developed an integral conception that allowed building the theory model of human perception of the surrounding reality. The author proved that the problem of language and thinking correlation must be researched on the basis of conceptual schemes analysis, their interconnections and relation to the surrounding world [Pavilionis 1983].

In the transformation linguistics of N. Chomsky there is an idea of considering the languages structures as an evidence of cognitive language organization, the necessity to use data of the neurological, physiological, ontological character to analyze the language and it is emphasized the importance to study the nature of human language abilities [Chomsky 1991].

One of the founders of the cognitive trend W. Chafe considered the language as an access to consciousness and a means of understanding the human cognitive sphere: «the language is a window into knowledge as we use the language to express it» [Chafe 1987: 109]. To the description of the speech activity structure and forms, its close connection with intellectual, cognitive and other human activities much was contributed by the works done in the plane of the Soviet and Russian psycholinguistics, the methodological sets of which were developed basing on such outstanding Soviet psychologists as L.S. Vygotsky, N.I. Zhinkin, A.N. Leontiev, A.R. Luria and other researchers.

Thus, in the frames of psycholinguistics that studies linguistic and psychological bases of the active «mastering» and language knowledge the scientists tried to single out and describe the speech operations basing on the reflection so as those which could not be reflected upon. Moreover, psycholinguists researched the forms, means and ways of the thought verbalization, analyzed the correlation of cognitive and language structures in order to study the human creative potential.

The scientific discussion that took place in 70-80s of the 20 century brought to the results changing the researchers' point of view on what was knowledge, the problem of thinking and language correlation and to some degree laying down the foundation for the cognitive trend of linguistics.

In the second half of last century the linguistic society admitted that it was necessary to research semantics as a leading beginning at transition from the thought to the word. As the result of those paradigm evolutions the approach to study the principles of thinking organization, peculiarities of knowledge usage in thinking processes and speech-thinking activity so as the idea of the language, its role and status drastically changed. Those changes connected with the putting and solving a wide circle of issues bear a global character and are based on the other organizing principles the main of which is considering the language as a means opening an access to the analysis of human cognitive abilities as the only instrument providing the access to consciousness as a way of objectification of different and varied level structures of the world existing in our mind.

Such point of view supposes its considering as one of the most natural accesses to human consciousness and as a means of knowledge forming, structuring and keeping. By knowledge in the cognitive linguistics plane we understand what is already in our mind and it is part of the memory, a definite set of data united into an ordered system that is not knowledge in general but knowledge represented in the language.

Despite the fact that the idea of significance of general knowledge of the world in the semantic research is not pioneering in the plane of the cognitive trend it has got the status of methodologically

important. The research results show that in the language there are some phenomena that can be explained only by the cognitive laws but not by the laws existing in the language. As it was emphasized by E.S. Kubriakova, studying the language from the cognitive point of view the linguists have a possibility to estimate the «mental essence» that are behind the language phenomena which are the key «consider the specificity of human intellect and human behavior» [Kubriakova 2004: 13].

With the development of the cognitive trend in linguistics the place and role of the human factor in cognitive processes, the meaning of not only mass but also individual knowledge is researched more actively.

One of the key points of the cognitive linguistics is its considering the language as a means of the representation how the world is understood by the human mind, how the surrounding world is categorized by the consciousness: the language is to «serve ... as a means of comprehending the world ontology, its conceptualization and including the conceptualization of the categories singled out in it» [Boldyrev 2005: 21].

Thus, in the issue concerning the human cognitive activity the positions developed in the cognitivism plane to some degree correlate to the social constructivism points. The point is about the subjectivity of cognition process, its dependency on the cognizing individual and the social determination of this process and also recognizing the fact that the cognition process is based on the already obtained knowledge.

We find it very important the theses about the social dependence of human cognition (through the process of socialization, through the language, the process of communication, through culture), about the socially generated sense and meaning that is determined by the cognitive system itself providing (consciously and unconsciously) preserving, selection and structuring of knowledge of the world. Comprehending this fact by representatives of different sphere of science knowledge has led to appearing the scientific trends which study the role of the social factor and personal daily experience of the individual in the process of cognition (from the sociology of understanding to the social theory of cognition, human psychology, constructivism in the plane of which it has been shown the impossibility to come down to the general schemes the personal experience of a single individual).

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