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# Ordinary Metalanguage Consciousness of Students from Germany Studying at the Russian University

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## Abstract

As a theoretical basis of the proposed work, it is accepted in naive linguistics comprehension that the area of human consciousness, accomplishing a function of the language reflector, has a multi-level structure. Unlike similar works concerning everyday reception of language, an attempt to shift the research focus from phenomena lying on the surface level of everyday metalanguage consciousness and accessible to an outside observer via text implementation in speech to the phenomena of a deeper level is made in this article. Hidden displays of metalanguage reflection collected by a special interview with the German-speaking foreign citizens studying in one of the Russian universities are analyzed and classified in this article.

## 1. Introduction

In recent years, both Russian and foreign specialists are paying more attention to issues of everyday language interpretation. Their efforts have focused on the description of naive knowledge of the language in order to supplement and expand the achievements of linguistics obtained through the usage of traditional methods (Anders, 2010, pp. 22-23). Today in the world of humanities is established the opinion that the everyday image of the outside

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and the inner world of a human is no less complicated and interesting than the scientific image, because referring to the naive, we are dealing with knowledge based on observation and introspection experience of dozens of generations for thousands of years. The special linguistic discipline – naive or folk linguistics, which has actively developed in recent years – focuses on the study of phenomena and processes that make up the everyday knowledge of the language (Niedzielski & Preston, 2000; Paveau, 2011).

In Russia, naive linguistics is an independent branch of linguistics represented by a smaller number of works and projects, than for example in Germany. So, at the University of Kiel, the project "German language landscape from the standpoint of the amateurs in the field of linguistics" (Anders, Hundt & Lasch, 2010; Anders & Schnorrenberg, 2012), and in the Institute for German Language, Mannheim – "Attitudes and analysis of current language installations in Germany" (Eichinger, Plewnia, Stahlberg & Schoel, 2012). To give examples of such large-scale projects in Russia is not yet possible. However, in modern Russian linguistics are rapidly evolving human oriented areas such as cultural linguistics, cognitive linguistics and naive linguistics. Representatives of these linguistic sectors are increasingly considering the issue of what ordinary people, not armed with special language skills, are thinking about the language. The central term of Russian naive linguistics coined by Rostova (2000) is the phrase *metalanguage consciousness*. Golev (2009) prefaced the phrase with the adjective *everyday*.

Although the keyword discussed herein – *consciousness* – is difficult to define precisely, it is generally understood and used extensively (Brazdau & Mihai, 2011). The general thing in the various interpretations of consciousn ess is underlining the fact that it is based on the reflexive and reflective nature of the human psyche. We have in mind that consciousness - is a category to describe the mental activity of a human in relation to the activity itself. Having became widespread in Russian naive linguistics, the term *everyday metalanguage consciousness* (hereinafter EMLC) reflects a quite complex and multifaceted phenomenon, covering the whole part of the human cognition, where he, so to speak, stands "above the language". The two axes – *language* and *reflection*, given by the concept EMLC, cover a wide range of aspects of language activity: "Metalanguage consciousness [is] dispersed in all areas of language and speech activity, manifesting itself in various degrees of actualization in different content (especially functional) and in different forms of existence (intuitive, logical, implicit, verbal, etc.)" (Golev, 2009).

Such a comprehensive understanding by the Russian scientists, an object of science being the study of the language about the language, allows one to allocate the tier structure: "metalanguage consciousness includes not only the scope of explicit, verbalized consciousness, but also the scope of the hidden consciousness..." (Rostova, 2000). A number of Russian scientists have expressed the belief that it is necessary to allocate EMLC levels from intuitive/implicit/unverbalized to conscious/expanded/verbalized reflection. Thus, studying the specifics of metalanguage reflection of the Russian dialect speakers, Ivantsova (2002) notes that this kind of mental activity of a human has different ways of explication as explicit, and less pronounced forms. For the names of discreet forms of speech, the scientist uses the term – *hidden EMLC evidence* (Ivantsova, 2002). The authors of this paper share this term.

The relevance of the proposed research is that unlike most of the works performed under naive linguistics, the present researchers have largely focused their attention, not on knowledge of the language, but on the methods and conditions of the explication of this knowledge. In addition, the research aims at the deep level of EMLC, which appears in speech in implicit, hidden forms. In other words, the object of research is such EMLC level, which on the one hand, does not find expression in the deployed (explicated) metalanguage commentary, but on the other hand, is not completely implicit or hidden from an outside observer. The object of linguistic description is hardly researched in overseas as well as in Russian linguistics.

Metalanguage reflection of foreign students studying in Russian universities is also poorly known. Only Simanova (2008) addresses this issue in her works, where, from the perspective of cognitive linguistics through special experimental techniques, she reveals representations of foreign students about studied non-native Russian and native languages.

## 2. Sample of the Research and Data Collection Instruments

Informants are twelve students from Germany studying engineering disciplines and Russian as a foreign language at National Research Tomsk Polytechnic University. These students participated in a linguistics

experiment, which consisted of an interview based on a questionnaire developed by the authors of the research. Questions asked during the interview motivated students to reflect on the German dialects common in Germany. It should be noted that the primary means of communication, mentioned by students, are literary and spoken German language. However, due to the strong position of dialectal varieties of German language in Germany, all informants participating in this research have certain attitudes to the German dialects and can speak each of them to varying extents. During the interview, the students expressed their attitude towards the dialects, rationalized their own level of dialectal competence and that of their relatives and friends, then presented words, phrases or whole texts in these dialects. Identification and typology of hidden EMLC evidence – the true purpose of the conducted linguistic experiment - was not revealed to the informants.

Interviewing was implemented mainly in the literary form of German language, which is competently spoken and well understood by the interviewers/authors of the research. As stated, the informants took their recourse in the dialects, mainly for the purpose of demonstrating its definite dialectal phenomena. At times, both interviewers and interviewees resorted to Russian as an interlanguage between them, which informants spoke at a level sufficient to communicate on general topics. An experiment and analysis of its results were realized in 2015.

## 3. Results and Discussions

Analysis of the experimental results allowed allocation into three separate groups within the total corpora of hidden EMLC evidence collected.

Communicative tasks of hidden EMLC evidence of the first group can be designated as actual metalanguage. They are used for explanations of various language phenomena and/or for attracting the attention of the interlocutor to them.

As stated, during the interviews students gladly demonstrated both words and whole texts in dialects. However, as interviewers did not speak German dialects, at times during the presentations of the dialectal text, it was necessary for informants to explain the meaning of a particular lexical item. For interpreting the meaning of lexical items, students resorted both to unwrapped metalanguage statements and to a method that saves speech effort of an informant: a repetition of the illustrated dialect item in the literary form of German language (more rarely – in Russian). Repetition with switching language code (Code-switching) is one of the most common examples of hidden EMLC evidence, implemented (stored) during the experiment.

Usually keywords in the displayed dialect text or those lexical items that have the most specific form as compared to the standard equivalents are repeated, switching code. Example 1 shows the text in Pfalzian dialect, example 2 – in Swabian.

*(1) „Tuwak, Tuwak, du Lumbekraute, wer tich gepflanzt hat bei der Nocht, der hot die kanze Welt versaut! So ein Sprichwort auf Pfälzisch.* **Tuwak***, das ist* **Tabak** *im Standarddeutsch.“*

*(2) „Ich muss jetzt geh. Esch schaad, dass ich noch a bissi bleiwe kon. Mei Muder waht dehähm.* **Dehähm** *ist* **daheim***, zu Hause!* **Muder***, so sagen wir über* **die Mutter***!“*

The experience of scientists researching everyday metalanguage consciousness shows that the phenomena of phonemic and morphemic levels of language, as compared to lexical specifics, less often become the subject of metalanguage reflection. This can be explained by the fact that, as compared to the vocabulary the, phoneme and morpheme are categories that are more abstract. Moreover, understanding the phenomena of identified language levels requires special knowledge that linguistic nonprofessionals usually do not possess. Concerning the interviewed informants, they are familiar with basic linguistic terms as students of the university, but in the course of this linguistic experiment, they also preferred to avoid detailed comments regarding the phonetic and morphological characteristics of the demonstrated dialects. Mostly EMLC hidden evidence were used, which is voice-dedicating and applying intonation of a single sound or morph in the word (examples 3, 4, 5).

*(3) „Die Bayern sagen nicht „Nein“, sondern „Naa“!“ (lengthens the vowel „a“).*

*(4) „Mir sin in die Berche gegange. Ber**ch**e!“ (brings out a spirant „ch“ by voice)*

*(5) „Mir drink in unsern Gaffee h**ei**s und si**eß**e!“ (brings out a diphthong „ei“ and a long vowel „i“ by voice)*

As can be seen from the examples, those phonetic and morphological phenomena are identified by voice and intonation, which, according to the informant, most emphasize the uniqueness of the demonstrated dialect in comparison with the German literary language.

This type of EMLC evidence may also accompany deployed statements about certain phonetic and morphological specifics. A phonetic or morphological phenomenon in a deployed metalanguage comment is brought out by voice and intonation. In other words, simultaneously both types of EMLC displays (demonstrations) can be used: explicit and implicit.

In situations of assimilation by the informants into their own speech from that of strange (foreign), hidden evidence of the second type were found. This phenomenon is usually observed in cases citing incidents of strange speech and in speech synchronization by the interviewed students.

Quotation – a quite common phenomenon captured in the dialogue between the informant and linguist. Respondents most often reproduce the statements of immediate family as well as neighbors, co-workers, colleagues and other people whom the informant contacted most frequently through life. Naturally, quoting someone's speech requires from a speaker rational handling of language; so to speak, it puts him in a position "above" language. However, not only the fact of playing (reproducing) someone's speech, but the accompanying quote's hidden EMLC evidence should be ranked as to the evidences of the EMLC activity at the moment of quotation.

Exact repetition by the informant's intonation pattern that was typical for original text falls into the category of hidden EMLC evidence, detectable when German dialect speakers are citing someone's speech. For realistic transferring (delivering) of someone's speech and expressive coloring, informant's own speech acts reproduce intonation and other prosodic features of the quoted statement (examples 6, 7).

*(6) „Sächsisch ist komisch. Meine Mutter sagt oft: „Des is waa!", oder sagt sie „Nee, dis is nisch waa!"" (repeats mother's intonation)*

*(7) „Der Vater sagt immer: „Liewer Dreg am Steg als im Dreg schdeg!"" (repeats father's intonation)*

Sometimes reproduction of a foreign language specificity is deliberate caricature; thereby, expressive function of a quote is enhanced. The peculiarity of the copied speech may seem comical to the informant, so the quotation is often accompanied by a psycho-physiological reaction such as laughter. Laughter (or smile) as an expression of ironic attitude towards this or that language phenomenon should also fall into the hidden EMLC evidence.

Intonation pattern, rhythm and recording of verbal rhymed texts were produced, as learned by informants from their relatives or friends (example 8).

*(8) Mein Großvater singt oft:*
*„Wenn der Pott aber nu ein Loch hat,*
*Lieber Heinrich, lieber Heinrich?*
*Stopf es zu, liebe, liebe Liese,*
*Liebe Liese, stopf des zu!*
*Womit soll ich des aber zustoppe,*
*Lieber Heinrich, lieber Heinrich?*
*Mit Stroh, liebe, liebe Liese,*
*Liebe Liese, mit Stroh!"*

As used by the students in the process of demonstrating dialect texts, some phonetic, grammatical and lexical phenomena unusual for the dialect should also fall into the hidden EMLC evidence. This process is due to so-called speech synchronization. At the heart of synchronization, as a linguistic category, is the understanding that each speaker has an individual set of language knowledge, which should be agreed in the process of communicants' interaction (Katerbow, 2010, p. 41). The synchronization process on the part of informants is that by the demonstration of texts in the dialect they often try to speak simply, avoiding complicated constructions, and adjust (correct) their own dialect speech towards literary form. Literary staining (coloring) of dialect speech is extended at the same time: more frequently - to the phonetic and morphological structure of the language system; less frequently - to the lexical structure.

The third group is hidden EMLC evidence recorded (fixed) in situations of one's deliberate own speech acts produced in dialect. This may be demonstration of metalanguage reflection occurring as slips of the tongue,

restoration of norms of speech, or as the difficulties in choosing the right words for the correct execution (formatting) of verbal expression.

In the case of reservations (slips of the tongue), by which we mean deviant use of a word/phrase of the German dialect, informants usually restore norms of speech, as follows: the reservation (slip of the tongue) → pause, expressing confusion → laughter (optional) → use of German particles and interjections (optional) → repeating words/phrases in accordance with the dialect standard (examples 10, 11).

*(9) „Das ischt an Kerle wie ain Grischbaum, e-e-e, nein, falsch! (laughs) Wie an Krischboom, Krischboom, der lässt sich älles ufhenga!"*

*(10) „Wir sagen „Bosse machen", das heisst „Dumheiten begehen!" Und für Blutwurst wird „Bunse", ... ne-e, „Blunse" gesagt."*

All speech phenomenon following reservations (slips of the tongue): pause, laughter, use of particles, repeating words, use of ironic intonation, etc. – are non-deployed demonstration of metalanguage reflection, which acetified as a result of irregularity of the norms of speech.

## 4. Conclusion

Summarizing the research, it should be noted that the allocation of hidden EMLC evidence in the speech flow of the interviewed informants is a difficult task. Thus, the explicit demonstrations of metalanguage reflection has a number of substantial and formal characteristics: their thematic content is built around the language, and in their structure, nouns and verbs with the language value are always present. In contrast to the detailed statements about the language, hidden EMLC evidence are less endowed with common expressive signs (markers) that would „signal" the involvement of the phenomenon to the metalanguage activity. Moreover, because of the diffuse nature of the boundaries between the EMLC levels, to separate its hidden demonstrations from the obvious ones, on the one hand, and from the facts of the actualization of cognitive processes that lie outside the linguistic reflection processes, on the other hand, is a challenging tusk. It may be said that hidden EMLC evidence lie in the peripheral area of the object of naive linguistics: metalanguage reflection, at their basis, is so explicated, that these phenomena often invade the field of research tasks not relevant to the question „What does a non-specialist think about the language?". At the same time, the peripheral nature (character) of the hidden EMLC evidence and complexity of their discovery in the general corpora of collected language material form the relevance of the research.

Despite the marked specificity of the subject of research, the analysis of the collected material using the experiment has allowed to imagine a general classification of the hidden EMLC evidence (see. Table. №1).

Table 1. Hidden evidences of ordinary metalanguage consciousness (based on German dialect speech of students from Germany studying in the Russian university).

| Speech situations of using hidden EMLC evidence | Types of hidden EMLC evidence |
| --- | --- |
| 1. Explanation of linguistic phenomena & draw the attention of the interlocutor to them | • words repeating with code-switching<br>• allocation of voice of word & part in the word |
| 2. Imitation of someone's speech & speech synchronization | • copying prosodic, phonetic, morphological, lexical features of the someone's speech<br>• laughter & irony when copying features of someone's speech<br>• literary painting dialect speech |
| 3. Irregularity & recovery & detailing of speech norms | • the various forms of language confusion (pause, laughter, slowing the speech rate, the use of the particle, the transition to a whisper)<br>• words repeating on principle<br>• using ironic tone<br>• using particles and interjections |

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