Conceptualization of the Kazakh language in the Linguistic Consciousness of the Kazakhs

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to describe ways of conceptualizing the Kazakh language from the perspectives of the representatives of the Kazakh nation. Language is a very important phenomenon for the people, which reflects their national characteristics. Of great interest is the conceptualization of the Kazakh language by representatives of the Kazakh linguoculture in the context of the situation when public opinion recognizes its position in general and its status as unsatisfactory rather than satisfactory. A special contribution of the author to the study of the topic is to conduct a free-associative experiment among native speakers of the Kazakh language on the stimulus-word “қазақ тілі”. The novelty of the study lies in the fact that the obtained associative data were distributed according to the frequency criterion with subsequent modeling of the associative field and its cognitive structure. A free associative experiment was carried out among the native speakers of the Kazakh language. The results of the study demonstrate that the Kazakh language reflects the origins of the nation, its history and customs. The native language for the Kazakh ethnic group is associated with Motherland, pride and patriotism. Analysis of proverbs, sayings and literary contexts have shown that the Kazakh language is very rich and actualizes the beginning of upbringing and morality.

KEYWORDS

Psycholinguistic study, semantic field, associative experiment, proverbs, cognitive analysis, concept, linguistic consciousness, ethno-specificity, linguoculture, the Kazakh language

1. Introduction

The central topics of inquiry in modern linguistics (such as psycholinguistics, cultural linguistics, and sociolinguistics) are linguistic consciousness and the image of the world (Kuzembayeva et al., 2019: 30). They cover studies of units of language and linguistic structures, in which their psychologically real content is revealed, that is, in what real, “psychologically authentic” set of semantic components a certain meaning exists in the consciousness of an ethnos and is stored in its linguistic memory; how the separate meaningful components which make up a word semantics are related in terms of “brightness” and relevance, what real semantic connections of words and structures are in the language memory of a person (Popova & Sternin, 2001). Psycholinguistic meaning is usually broader and more voluminous than its lexicographic correlate (which, as a rule, is entirely included in the psycholinguistic meaning, although its components may occupy different places in the psycholinguistic meaning in terms of brightness) (Sternin & Rudakova, 2011). In this respect, Russian psycholinguists have used the associative method to investigate the so-called cultural specificity of linguistic consciousness (Pax et al, 2019: 11). The method of associative experiment based on verbal associations of subjects participating in the investigation is considered to be effective since it reveals the peculiarities of the national, linguistic awareness of people, i.e. connections of words in their consciousness, their semantic and hierarchical subordination, the brightness of certain components of the meaning of the stimulus word, their axiological features in the society (Mukhametzyanova & Shayakhmetova, 2014). Moreover, it allows revealing mental images of the external world inherent in representatives of a certain ethnic group (Kuzembayeva et al, 2019: 31).
Thus, the data obtained by means of a free associative experiment can be interpreted as a consciousness reflection of representatives from different cultures and will reveal characteristics of linguistic consciousness and the national and cultural specificity of a particular ethos.

The aim of the study is to describe ways of conceptualizing native language by representatives of the Kazakh ethnos, modeling the associative field “қазақ тілі” (the Kazakh language) in the Kazakh linguistic culture, and identifying peculiarities in the conceptualization of the native language among speakers of the Kazakh language. The importance of the study is justified as the chosen concept қазақ тілі, being the micromodel of the national cognitive mentality, serves as a tool for revealing national specifics in the minds of native speakers of a given ethnic group. A nation is often associated with its language, a very important phenomenon for the people, which reflects their national characteristics. On the one hand, it serves as one of the constants that exist in the minds of native speakers of the Kazakh language; on the other hand, it is characterized by quite rich multilateral features in terms of its content.

2. Linguistic analysis of the concept the Kazakh Language
Attempts to probe into the concept of Russian and other languages have been repeatedly made in national science (Shushakova, 2012; Tavgiridze, 2005; Musina, 2008), but no studies were conducted on the concept of the Kazakh language.

In the Dictionary of the Kazakh Literary Language (2011) the lexeme “қазақ тілі” has the following meanings: 1) түркі тілдерінің қыпшақ тобына жататын әдеби тілі бай ауыз әдебиетінің жалпысы, тілінің құрамының қалыптасқан қазіргі тилі; қазақ ұлттының ұлттық тілі, Қазақстан Республикасының мемлекеттік тілі (literary language belonging to the Kipchak group of Turkic languages is the national language of modern Kazakh people formed based on the popular language of oral literature, the state language of the Republic of Kazakhstan (translated by authors);

2) қазақ ұлттының құрамына енген ру-тайпалар тілдерінің құрамындағы туралы қосымша қызметтік тіл;

Proverbs, being a special type of linguistic and cultural text characterized by markers of the community, value-semantic, associative and expressive content, reflect national cultural information differently. They include specific and familiar images, which in the process of use and rethinking acquire a deep generalization. In ethnocultural metaphors, there are ideas about a phenomenon for the people, which reflects their national characteristics. On the one hand, it serves as one of the constants that exist in the minds of native speakers of the Kazakh language; on the other hand, it is characterized by quite rich multilateral features in terms of its content.

The Kazakh language is an immense treasure, an immense world (translated by the authors).
Respect for the native language is equivalent to respect for the country because the language is sacred for every person. (translated by the authors)

Prominent Kazakh writers dreamt that one day the Kazakh language would take an important role among the Turkic world: Күнөрдө бір күн түрк балаларының тілі біріксе, ол біріккен тілдің негізі қазақ тілі болса, сөзді жоқ, түрк тілінің келесі қарығында қазақ ұлығы тәрізді орын алуамы (М. Жұмабаев "Педагогика", 116) / If one day the language of the Turkic children unites, and the Kazakh language becomes the basis of a single language, of course, in the future history of the Turkic people, the Kazakh people will take its respected place (translated by the authors).

The Kazakh language is rich. It covers a wide range of science, industry, social and political life: Осының өзі-оқ, қазақ тілінің жетілген белетпірісі тілі гана емес, толыққанды сақты және ғылылы публицистіктың тілі екендігін көрсетеді (қазақ тілінің қазіргі әріптесті ықтималдықтары) / This clearly shows that the Kazakh language is not only the language of advanced fiction but also the language of full-fledged political and scientific journalism (translated by the authors).

Language is the best medium for establishing friendship and harmony. The more languages people learn, the more they know. No language of the world is aimed at destruction, enmity, hatred. The functions of language are communication, cognition, aesthetics only in its language (translated by the authors).

In the Kazakh family, when the child begins to speak clearly, special attention is paid to the correct expression of kinship terms, family genealogy, and people of the country. Our ancestors believed that knowledge of the history of origin contributes to forming the civil and patriotic qualities in a child. So language is the beginning of upbringing: Тәрбие тілден басталады / Upbringing begins with language (translated by the authors); Этика и мораль коренятся в родном языке (translated by the authors). Identification as a nation, a country is preserved when a nation is able to realize it through the language.
and preserved for future generations. It is necessary to preserve the native language to keep to the national culture and traditions.

### 3. Methodology

The free associative experiment, being one of the ways to identify the associative fields of cultural and national images represented in the language picture of the world, was used in our study. Students from K. Zhubanov Aktobe Regional University and West Kazakhstan Marat Ospanov Medical University (Aktobe, the Republic of Kazakhstan) took part in the free-associative experiment. The respondents comply with people from Uralsk, Atyrau, Aktau, Kyzylorda, and Aktobe cities studying at the universities mentioned above. The total number of respondents is 219 people aged 17-23 years, of which 86 respondents are males and 133 are females. The stimulus “қазақ тілі” was offered and the respondents were invited to write the first associations with it that came to mind. The number of reactions was not limited.

Data obtained from a free associative experiment was comprehensively analyzed by defining the frequency ratio of reactions, i.e. lexical associations, and determining the core-periphery relationship between them. By cognitive analysis of the associative field “қазақ тілі” in the Kazakh language, semantic zones in its structure were distinguished.

### 4. Results and Discussion

In the course of the free-associative experiment, 746 associative reactions were received, of which 47 were different. Based on the frequency of lexical associations, the core (identified by reactions from more than 40 respondents), the near periphery (20-40), the far periphery (10-20), and the outer periphery (<10) were determined (see Table 1).

#### Table 1: The associative field of the stimulus қазақ тілі in the Kazakh linguistic consciousness

| Core | ана тілі (mother tongue) 82, Абай (Abay) 47, қазақ ұлтты (kazakh nationality) 44, Отан (homeland) 45, Қазақстан (Kazakhstan) 43, |
| Near periphery | мемлекеттік тіл (state language) 29, дәстүр (tradition) 28, алынғы (alphabet) 25, тарих (history) 23, тауелсіздік (independence) 22, адебиет (literature) 21, патриотизм (patriotism) 21, |
| Far periphery | мақтаныш (pride) 19, құндылық (value) 18, шеңбері (genealogy) 17, ақындар (poets) 16, ұлт (nationality) 16, алаш (alash) 14, тәрбие (upbringing) 14, ата-ана (parents) 12, бай (rich) 13, отбасы (family) 12, рух (spirit) 12, Ахмет Байтұрсынов 11, грамматика (grammar) 11, мұра (heritage) 11, түркі тілдер (turkic languages) 11, белашқақ (future) 10, абымыр (reputation) 10, ана (mother) 10, |
| Outer periphery | ережелер (rules) 9, кітап (book) 9, шешендік (oration) 9, қарапайым (simple) 7, латын (Latin) 7, коммуникация (communication) 6, мейірімділік (kindness) 5, Шакарим (Shakarim) 5, сердце (beautiful) 4, этнос (ethnos) 4, қының (complicated) 4, Қызылорда (Kyzylorda) 3, саясат (politics) 2, терең (deep) 2, айтыс (aitys) 1, таза (clear) 1, оралымды (eloquent) 1, |

Source: authors

As a result of the cognitive analysis of the associative field “қазақ тілі” in the Kazakh language the following semantic zones we distinguished, the order of the components was determined by their number. Associations in semantic zones are given in decreasing order of their frequency:

**Language (201 – 26.94%)**: ‘Ана тілі’ mother tongue (10.99%), ‘мемлекеттік тіл’ state language (3.89%), ‘алынғы’ alphabet (3.35%), ‘адебиет’ literature (2.8%), ‘грамматика’ grammar (1.5%), ‘түркі тілдер’ Turkic languages (1.5%), ‘кітап’ book (1.2%), ‘латын’ Latin (0.9%), ‘коммуникация’ communication (0.8%);

**Nation and country (155 – 20.8%)**: ‘Отан’ homeland (6.03%), ‘қазақ ұлтты’ Kazakh nationality (5.9%), ‘Қазақстан’ Kazakhstan (5.8%), ‘ұлт’ nationality (2.14%) Қызылорда ‘этнос’ ethnos (0.5%), Кызылорда (0.4%);

**History and ideals (132 – 17.73%)**: ‘тарих’ history (3.08%), ‘тауелсіздік’ independence (2.95%), ‘патриотизм’ patriotism (2.82%), ‘шеңбері’ genealogy (2.28%), ‘Алаш’ Alash (1.88%), ‘рух’ spirit (1.6%), ‘мұра’ heritage (1.48%), ‘болашақ’ future (1.34%), ‘сақсат’ politics (0.27%);

**Kazakh poets and writers (89 – 11.93%)**: ‘Абай’ Abay (6.3%), ‘акындар’ poets (2.14%), ‘Ахмет Байтұрсынов’ Akhmet Baitursynov (1.5%), ‘шешендік’ oratory (1.2%), ‘Шакарим’ Shakarim (0.67%), ‘айтыс’ aitys (0.13%);

**Axiological notions (79 – 10.59%)**: ‘мақтаныш’ pride (2.55%), ‘құндылық’ value (2.41%), ‘бай’ rich (1.74%), ‘абымыр’ reputation (1.34%), ‘қарапайым’ simple (0.94%); ‘әдеми’ beautiful (0.54%), ‘қының’ complicated (0.54%), ‘терең’ deep (0.27%), ‘таза’ clear (0.13%), ‘оралымды’ eloquent (0.13%);

**Norms (51 – 6.84%)**: ‘дәстүр’ tradition (3.75%), ‘тәрбие’ upbringing (1.88%), ‘ережелер’ rules (1.2%);

**Family (34 – 4.56%)**: ‘ата-ана’ parents (1.6%), ‘отбасы’family (1.6%), ‘ана’ mother (1.34%);

**Morals (5 – 0.67%)**: ‘мейірімділік’ kindness (0.67%).
Semantic zones that were formed include language (26.94%), nation and country (20.8%), history and ideals (17.73%), Kazakh poets and writers (11.93%), axiological notions (10.59%), norms (6.84%), family (4.56%), morals (0.67%). It follows from the obtained data that the Kazakh language in the Kazakh linguistic consciousness is objectified, first of all, by the mother tongue (10.99%), Abay (6.3%), homeland (6.03%) and the Kazakh nationality (5.9%). In addition, the native language, according to the associative reactions of the Kazakh respondents, actualizes Kazakhstan (5.8%), state language (3.9%), tradition (3.8%), alphabet (3.6%), history (3.1%), independence (2.95%), literature (2.8%) and patriotism (2.8%).

5. Conclusion

This psycholinguistic (free-associative) experiment aimed at describing the concept of the native language in the minds of the Kazakh native speakers is a valuable source of information and an effective tool for determining the content of concepts in the linguistic consciousness of the ethnus. It is also efficient in studying the ethnical specificity of nations, contributing to understanding and successful intercultural interaction between representatives of different linguocultures.

The associative experiment showed that ‘the Kazakh language’ has an extensive associative field (746 reactions), which proves its importance for the Kazakh linguistic consciousness. The associative field is divided into meaningful zones without the remainder and forms 8 semantic zones: language, nation and country, history and ideals, Kazakh poets and writers, axiological notions, norms, family and morals. These semantic zones characterize various aspects of understanding the Kazakh language by representatives of the Kazakh ethnus. The most voluminous semantic zone in the associative field is the group that includes features of language in general (26.94%), nation / country (20.8%) and history / ideals (17.73%). The most prominent components of this zone is mother tongue (10.99%), state language (3.89%), alphabet (3.35%), literature (2.8%), homeland (6.03%), Kazakh nationality (5.9%), Kazakhstan (5.8%), history (3.08%), independence (2.95%), patriotism (2.82%).

Thus, the Kazakh language in linguistic consciousness of the native speakers is, in the first place, objectified by the mother tongue which is a state language, Kazakh nation and country, its history, independence and literature. The limitations of the study are connected with the geographic scope of participants. The survey respondents represented the western part of the Republic of Kazakhstan, and the limited ability to gain access to the citizens of other regions might have had its impact on the study results in describing the linguistic consciousness of the Kazakhs in general. We believe that a further comparative research of representatives of different parts of the country and a cross-cultural study of language conceptualizations of other nations has great prospects for scientific research.

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