Cognitive Structure of the Concept Politics in Russian and Norwegian Linguistic Worldview

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ABSTRACT

This article presents a comparative study of the concept POLITICS in Norwegian and Russian linguistic worldview. The authors present the results of the cognitive-semantic and psycholinguistic study of the concept in the minds of the inhabitants of the northern regions of the Murmansk region in Russian Federation and Finnmark County in Norway. Firstly, the study includes a comparative analysis of the regional press discourse: the issues of Vecherny Murmansk and Finnmarken bladet were subject to contextual and content analysis. Secondly, the article describes the results of the associative experiments conducted in both regions. Then the cognitive structures of the concepts were analysed taking into account the components singled out on both stages, concurrent and different characteristics summarized.

On the first stage, elements of content analysis alongside with quantitative processing of materials are used for identifying the concepts. The investigation shows that the elements of the concept sphere POLITICS singled out through the regional press display certain correlation in both regions, the largest number of articles is devoted to the activities of local (rather than federal) government bodies. The revealed components include Domestic policy (Activities of municipalities, Elections, (political) Parties, Political actions, rallies, events, President – Rus., Crime control – Nor.,), Foreign policy (International contacts – Rus., Refugees – Nor.). The further investigation proves that these results correlate with the data obtained from the associative experiment. A number of associative reactions in the structure of key concepts of the linguistic worldview in the minds of the bearers of different languages and representatives of different cultures show a certain affinity: power, elections, party. In addition, the study reveals critical attitude of both societies to politics. A number of similar negative associative reactions to politics were found: the Murmansk region residents mentioned corruption deceit, diet, dishonesty, injustice, falsehood; while Norwegian residents spoke of lagn / false, corrupsjon / corruption, apathiey, lytter ikke til folk / do not listen to people, kaos / chaos, dele sin egen kake / share your cake, svindel / fraud, teater / theater, spill / games, ubarmhjertig / ruthless, urettferdighet / injustice, inkompetanse / incompetence.

Comparative analysis of the structure and content of the concept POLITICS in media discourse and the results of the associative experiment give the account for of the cognitive structures of the semantic fields of the concept in the minds of the inhabitants of Murmansk region and northern Norway. The results show considerable coincidence in all positions in – positive, neutral, and negative ideas. The structure of the concept in question is similar for both northern cultures and provides a foundation for further good neighbourly relations and scientific advancement.

Keywords: cognitive semantics, concept, associative experiment, Norwegian and Russian linguistic worldview, comparative study
1. Introduction

1.1 Introduction into the problem

The study subject seems relevant as the idea of collective consciousness and awareness of the Northern identity is shared by people living in the Arctic area. The long-standing friendship in Nordic Europe significantly contributes to the idea of the Northern identity. The 75th anniversary of Norway’s liberation from the fascists with the help of the Soviet soldiers was celebrated in 2019. A video of Norwegian schoolchildren singing the Russian anthem went viral on the Internet. Despite the certain tensions in Russian-Norwegian relations because of Norway joining the sanctions against Russia and the increasing NATO presence in the Arctic, good neighbourly relations are very important in the Far North. A study on similarities and differences in national attitudes of northern residents may help that. We have already studied dominant ideas of Far North residents before [See 3]. This article specifically focuses on one of the most relevant concepts: POLITICAL.

Purpose of the study: by means of content analysis of the regional press as well as through associative experiment conducted in both regions, personally or by filling the questionnaire, to define the structure of such a key concept as POLITICAL in the linguistic worldview of residents of northern Norway and northwestern Russia.

1.2. Topicality

The investigation of the cultural specifics of the national worldview is one of the most widely studied topics in modern linguistics, which reflects anthropocentricity of the modern paradigm of not only linguistic research, but also of other areas of science. As the linguists underline it, language studies recently “have boosted discussion and research into the most exciting linguistic issues, one of them being the development and conceptual interpretation of national linguistic consciousness and linguistic persona” [Sibul, 2004, p. 55]. B. Whorf [2012] pointed out in his works the necessity of admitting the influence of language on different aspects of human activity. Meanwhile, the term “conceptual world image”, or “picture of the world”, or “worldview”, remains vague and multifaceted. In our work, we proceed from the fact that the national worldview is considered to be the sum total of individual and collective cognitive-discursive activities. According to N.I. Kurganova “the world picture as a definite system of knowledge, ideas, value judgments is the result of the cognitive-discursive activity of a nation or people, fixed in a word (speech)” [Kurganova, 2018, p.207]. The reflection of the world in a language can be registered through the analysis of the knowledge presented in word or text (discourse) and this is the condition allowing worldview study. Hence, to study language consciousness, it is important to analyse texts, since it is text as a speech product that gives an idea of the language personality and image of the world that people have because “each text shows a language personality that has a command of a language system” [Belyanin, 2008, p. 126].

V.G. Vorkachev’s definition of a concept “a concept is a unit of collective knowledge / consciousness that directs to higher spiritual values, has a linguistic expression and is marked by ethnocultural specificity” [Vorkachev, 2001, p. 64], suggests the study of conceptual structure through the linguistic analysis. The analysis of the articles of the regional press and the results of the associative experiment allowed us to model the structure of the conceptual worldview of the inhabitants of the northern regions, as well as highlight its dominant concepts.

According to A. A. Zalevskaya, “the word is the means for reaching an individual image of the world” [Zalevskaya, 2005, p. 3-5]. Thus, the associative experiment that shows the possibility to be used as the main method of accessing a human information base in modern psycholinguistics, gives a key to linguistic consciousness. L.V. Shcherba argued that experiment was necessary in linguistics: “having built a certain abstract system on facts from [language] material, we have to test it on new facts, i.e. see whether the facts observed correspond to reality” [Shcherba, 1974, p. 30]. Hence, an associative experiment appears to be a logical next step of the study.

In our study, we adhere to the principles that assist to construct the worldview on the basis of the newspaper discourse analysis, worked out by N.I. Kurganova [Kurganova, Tyurkan, Kotskeva, 2017]. The analysis includes several steps: 1) distinguishing key concepts from the newspaper data belonging to the social-political discourse of Norway and Russia by the criterion of frequency of mention; 2) working out a cognitive structure of the singled out concepts; 3) working on the semantic structure of the singled out concepts, identifying its semantic dominants and their reflections in the in the national worldview of the citizens of Norway and North Russia.

The following research methods were used in our work: contextual and content analysis of texts of regional media with the aim of identifying key concepts; contextual analysis of the texts of the regional press;
associative experiment; in which also quantitative methods were engaged; comparative analysis, generalization method, and other general scientific methods.

The study was carried out in three phases. The first phase involved a content analysis of texts in periodicals related to regional politics. The material was obtained from Finnmarken, a regional daily of the Finnmark County, the biggest and northernmost Norwegian constituent unit fully located to the north of the Arctic Circle, and Vecherniy Murmansk, one of the largest regional periodicals from Murmansk Oblast, which borders Norway.

Finnmarken has been published since 1899. It is published 6 times a week, has from 24 to 32 pages, and covers social, political, cultural, and sports news. We have analysed over 2,000 region-related articles in Finnmarken, 700 of them including the concept of POLITICS. The yearly sample of Vecherniy Murmansk contained over 6,000 articles. The content analysis of the collected material helped describe the structure of northerners’ ideas on politics and identify core structural components of the concept in the national consciousness of the two neighbouring countries.

The second stage included the associative experiment conducted in both countries either in person or by filling in the questionnaire placed for the interviewees at http://webanketa.com. The procedure for an associative experiment is as follows. Subjects are presented with a word ‘politics’ and are told that they need to answer with the first words that come to mind. In our case “free” associative experiment was held, which means, that subjects were not given any restrictions on verbal reactions. The most frequent verbal reactions to the presented verbal stimuli were analysed to identify the stereotypical core of the associative field “Politics” in the linguistic consciousness of the Norwegian and Russian participants. Then, the results of the experiment were compared to the results of the press analysis, which enabled the authors to single out concurrent issues.

The third stage implied comparative analysis of the data obtained from the press and from the associative experiment. It resulted in singling out the semantic dominants in the national worldview of Norway and Russia singling out common and differing components.

2. Hypothesis

Since the national worldview reflects the results of speech activity and value orientations of the society, the psycholinguistic analysis of newspaper discourse will make it possible to identify and model the content of such a key concept of the national conceptual sphere as POLITICS and the structure of its individual concepts in both regions under study. A comparative analysis of the press and the results of the associative experiment may help to highlight the concurrence of the national view of the world, to describe the structural features of this concept for the residents of the northern regions of Russia and Norway. Due to long-term interethnic contacts, similar geocultural and climatic conditions the structure of the concept in question might appear similar in certain aspects for both of the northern cultures.

3. Main Body

The first phase assumed the collection of the empirical data through a conceptual analysis of media texts in the northern regions. The content of the POLICY concept was determined by statistical calculations (number of uses per number of publications). The study required the development of an appropriate methodology. We applied a set of necessary experimental procedures to identify the key concepts of the newspaper discourse. The criterion for the choice of articles was the presence of a regional component in the newspaper material, which allows optimally presenting the peculiar features of the worldview in the regions of study. The content of the key concept POLITICS, its cognitive-semantic structure was determined by the method of content analysis. The procedure helped to model the structural parameters of the concept under study.

In particular, the Finnmarken articles primarily covered the following subjects over the year: local authorities/elections (268), refugees (191), fighting crime (176), and government politics (64). The cognitive structure of the concept POLICY based on Finnmarken (Finnmark dagblad); June 2018 – May 2019 is presented in table 1.
Table 1. Finnmarken 2018-2019

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category/concept</th>
<th>Season of issue</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Summer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local authorities/ elections</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crime control</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government policy</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Refugees</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freedom of press</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>140</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The identification of the components of the conceptual sphere POLITICS compiled on the results of the analysis of the local press in Murmansk region (on the material of Vecherniy Murmansk): Internal politics - 37%; Political life in the region - 20%; Elections - 15%. International events - 29%.

Table 2. Vecherniy Murmansk 2018-2019

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category/concept</th>
<th>Season of issue</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Summer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Domestic policy/ The activities of the Duma</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign policy / International contacts</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local authorities / elections</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Accordingly, the study of the regional press allows us to see a certain coincidence in the structure and elements of the key concept POLITICS in both countries. The majority of the studied issues cover the activities of the local authorities and elections to regional bodies, rather than international events or the news in the country in general. This is understandable, since this is the idea of the regional press and its function.

On the other hand, one can observe a bigger social activity of local population in northern Norway as it is seen from the articles covering the numerous events in the political life of the region. The news about the local political life in the North of Russia are less frequent. The annual number of articles concerning the components of the concept POLICY is almost 5 times bigger than the number of such articles in Murmansk press (853 and 148, respectively). The data either illustrates a bigger great political activity of the Norwegians living in northern Norway, or shows a bigger interest of the Norwegian press to such events.

Here we should also admit the fact that the structure of any concept under study, including POLITICS, is dynamic. That means that its cognitive structure changes in time. We noticed that some cognitive layers transfer to the nucleus zone of the concept in a certain part of the year as some events, political or economic, or ecological or other, are more actively discussed in press in a certain season.

Take for example the dynamics of changes in one of the cognitive layers of the concept POLICY the layer ‘Refugees’. As seen from the analysis of the press in the beginning of 2018, this topic was discussed quite frequently presenting the problems of providing the immigrants and their families with decent living conditions, granting them assistance in all spheres, fine-tuning the attitude the local population. In 2019, the situation changes and the local press reacts to it with many articles concerning the deterioration of the criminal situation. The press discusses delinquency situations in which refugees were involved. As a result, the articles about the changes in the criminal situation alter the structure of the conceptual sphere giving way to the new semantic dominant. The influx of refugees and their behavior in the country influences the minds of the community reflected in the press and the layer ‘Refugees’, one of the core elements in the POLITICS concept, changes its content. The negative element moves from the peripheral zone to the nuclear one throughout the year. Similar changes are observed in the components of other conceptual layers.

At the second stage in addition to analyzing the worldview on the material of Norwegian and Russian press, we proceed to the associative experiment. As many scientists see it, this psycholinguistic method as a research method, which gives access to a person’s information base. Hence, it allows fulfilling an objective study of the national worldview. For our research, the associative experiment will assist to determine the most
relevant problems for the regions and the attitude of the citizens to them. The purpose of these associative experiments is to continue the study of the content and structure of the ideas of the inhabitants of the Far North about the key and basic concepts extracted from the materials of regional media.

The interview was partially conducted in person during a visit to Norway in July 2018. In addition, we interviewed 51 respondents in the associative experiment, placing our questionnaire at http://webanketa.com.

It is widely known that in Norway there exist more than 200 dialects. Since the 19th century after the liberation of the country the norms based on different dialects were developing. The traditional reformed bokmål (and riksmål, a more conservative version) was the literary variety having many Danish features in Grammar, Lexis and spelling. Alongside it, new Norwegian - Nynorsk - was modelled from colloquial dialects by a famous philologist Ivar Osun. Nowadays Bokmål (and Riksmål) is used by 90% of citizens. Nynorsk, a relatively new literary modern language, is chosen by 10% of the inhabitants. Besides, Finmark is a specific province as a significant part of its population (about 24%) is Sami, and their language is an official language in this province, too. Taking into consideration the fact that Bokmål is used by the majority of the population in Norway, the questionnaire, that we prepared for the experiment, was conducted in this variety of Norwegian.

The analysis of the questionnaire results made it possible to identify the stereotypical core of the associative field according to five stimulus words in frames of 10 most frequent verbal reactions to the presented verbal stimuli. Further, a number of basic propositions were singled out to range all associates of the semantic field for each stimulus. On this basis, we constructed the reflection of the semantic field on the conceptual level. The set of distinguished cognitive layers was formed taking into consideration the structure of the associative fields obtained from the experiment.

The subjects had to write words they associated with “politics” (politikk). The reactions were divided into core and peripheral ones in line with their frequency, the peripheral associations (fewer than 10 reactions) being disregarded. The core components were: demokrati/democracy, makt/power, valg/election, parti/(political) party, likestillings/equality, løytn / lies, flyktninger/refugees.

The structure of the associative field is viewed as follows: the field is divided into a nucleus, a sub-nuclear zone and periphery. The elements are referred to a nucleus of the field when they cover more than 10% of the associates given for the stimulus, from 5% to 10% - the sub-nuclear zone, the periphery zone includes the reactions that show less than 5% of mentions.

As a result, the field structure of AP “Politikk / Politics” can be represented as follows:

**Core (95%):** Results - 17%; Consequences - 16%; Attitude - 16%; Conditions - 16%; People - 16%; Essence - 14%;

**Peripherals (5%):** Rating - 2%; Types - 2%; Place - 1%.

The comparative analysis of the cognitive structure of the key concepts of media discourse and cognitive structures in the Politikk / Politics associative field show, that there is a considerable coincidence of a number of layers: Valg / Elections, Flyktninger / Refugees (see Table 1), representing the semantic dominants of the conceptual structure of the studied conceptual sphere. These layers evidently are presented both in the content analysis and in the results of the associative experiment, where they take a position in the nuclear zone of the associative field. It allows us to conclude that in the linguistic consciousness of the inhabitants of northern Norway these points occupy a leading position.

The same psycholinguistic experiment took place in the ch. The Murmansk Oblast residents of different ages and occupations participated in it. The analysis of the results of the associative experiment identified a stereotypical core of the associative field triggered by the word politika/politics, which is as follows: vybory/election, vlast/power, Putin, president, partiya/[political] party, gyraz/filth, lozh/lies.

The cognitive layers were ranked according to the quantitative data. The results allowed us to model the cognitive structure of the associative field “Politika”. In general, the field semantic structure “Politics” is presented as follows:

**Core (90% of reactions):** People - 30%; Tool - 23%; Rating / Attitude - 14%; Place - 12%; Result - 11%;

**Sub-nuclear zone (5% of reactions):** Consequences - 5%; Periphery (less than 5% of reactions): Entity - 3%; Types - 2%.

The analysis does not identify through the associative experiment any significant differences in the structure of the conceptual sphere POLITICS in northern Norway and in Murmansk region. The concept structure includes components, such as power, election, and political party. There is also an obvious similarity in negative reactions to “politics” in both with filth (gyraz), lies (lozh/vraniyo), deception (obman), injustice (nespravedlivost’), dishonesty (nechestnost’), insincerity ( fals’h’), corruption (korruptsiya) in Murmansk Oblast and lies (løytn), corruption (korrupsjon), fraud (svindel), injustice (uretferdighet), incompetence
(inkompetanse) in Norway. It is no surprise that different cultures agree on their attitude towards politics, where practical reason has been playing the leading part since Machiavelli, justifying the suitability of political actions regardless of moral principles.

The result demonstrates the function of regional press: to cover primarily local events and actions of local authorities. It is however obvious that the yearly sample of the Finnmark newspaper on politics is almost five times larger than that of Murmansk Oblast. Specific attention is given to the issue of refugees, and the issue of fighting crime is closely related to that, since crime levels have somewhat increased recently, likely because of the influx of refugees.

4. Conclusions
The study allowed achieving the following:
- to highlight POLITICS as one of the key concepts of the linguistic worldview of the citizens of the Arctic regions of Russia (on the example of Murmansk region) and Norway through the analysis of the public press;
- on the basis of associative experiments to study the key concept POLITICS, its components and structure, as well as its representation in the minds of the Russians and the Norwegians, living in the Barents region, and thus, sharing certain geocultural conditions but belonging to different linguistic cultures;
- to reveal the impact of the political mass-media on the cultural and social views of the population of the Murmansk region in Russia and Finnmark in Norway.

The comparative analysis of the concept POLITICS based on the analysis of regional media texts and the associative experiment done in Arctic regions of Russia and Norway therefore shows concurrence in positive, neutral, and negative ideas. The structure of the concept in question is similar for both of the northern cultures and provides a foundation for further good neighbourly relations and scientific advancement.

The materials of this study may be relevant for a number of areas of knowledge, in particular, in the field of intercultural communication, of comparative cultural studies, in the field of socio-political design and forecasting.

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Conflict of Interests
The authors confirm that the data provided does not contain any conflict of interests.

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