

**LINGUISTIC REPRESENTATION OF THE NOTION "MIGRANT CHILDREN" IN  
NAIVE CONSCIOUSNESS OF NATIVE RUSSIAN SPEAKERS**

**REPRESENTAÇÃO LINGUÍSTICA DA NOÇÃO "CRIANÇAS MIGRANTES" NA  
CONSCIÊNCIA INGÊNUA DE ORADORES RUSSOS NATIVOS**

**REPRESENTACIÓN LINGÜÍSTICA DE LA NOCIÓN "NIÑOS MIGRANTES" EN LA  
CONCIENCIA INGENUA DE LOS HABLANTES NATIVOS DE RUSO**

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**ABSTRACT:** The article deals with the linguistic representation of the notion of "migrant children" in the naive consciousness of native Russian speakers. The notion under study correlates with the worldview as an integral image of the world in a person's mind. As the worldview is a multilevel phenomenon, there are different levels of generalization and representation of knowledge. Usually, the linguistic worldview is investigated precisely about the specific ethnocultural features of a particular people and correlates with large ethnocultural groups. Based on the associations obtained as a result of a free association experiment, a field model of the concept of "migrant children" is developed.

**KEYWORDS:** Migration linguistics. Notion. "Migrant children". Free association experiment. Worldview. Connotative meanings.

**RESUMO:** O artigo trata da representação linguística da noção de "crianças migrantes" na consciência ingênua de falantes nativos de russo. A noção em estudo se correlaciona com a visão de mundo como uma imagem integral do mundo na mente de uma pessoa. Como a cosmovisão é um fenômeno multinível, existem diferentes níveis de generalização e representação do conhecimento. Normalmente, a visão de mundo linguística é investigada precisamente em relação às características etnoculturais específicas de um determinado povo e se correlaciona com grandes grupos etnoculturais. Com base nas associações obtidas como resultado de uma experiência de associação livre, é desenvolvido um modelo de campo do conceito de "crianças migrantes".

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**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** *Linguística de migração. Noção. “Crianças migrantes”. Experiência de associação livre. Visão de mundo. Significados conotativos.*

**RESUMEN:** *El artículo trata de la representación lingüística de la noción de "niños migrantes" en la conciencia ingenua de los hablantes nativos de ruso. La noción en estudio se correlaciona con la cosmovisión como una imagen integral del mundo en la mente de una persona. Como la cosmovisión es un fenómeno multinivel, existen diferentes niveles de generalización y representación del conocimiento. Por lo general, la cosmovisión lingüística se investiga precisamente en relación con las características etnoculturales específicas de un pueblo en particular y se correlaciona con grandes grupos etnoculturales. A partir de los asociados obtenidos como resultado de un experimento de libre asociación, se desarrolla un modelo de campo del concepto de "niños migrantes".*

**PALABRAS CLAVE:** *Lingüística migratoria. Noción. "Niños migrantes". Experimento de asociación libre. Cosmovisión. Significados connotativos.*

## Introduction

This work continues a series of empirical studies that we conducted on the image of the world that exists in the naive consciousness of native speakers (SHUSTOVA *et al.*, 2020; CHERNOUSOVA, 2017). An image of the world or worldview in philosophy, linguistics, psychology is the ideas about the surrounding reality that exist in human consciousness and represent the fundamental components of the culture of a particular ethnic group. The worldview reflects the specific features of a person and their being, the relationship with the world, the most important conditions for their existence in the world.

Recently, the concept of "worldview" has become widespread in various fields of scientific knowledge, while differences in the interpretation of this concept are explained from the standpoint of the history of the term used by representatives of different sciences. Synonymous concepts are often used: "world vision", "outlook", "perception of the world", "model of the world", "image of reality", "thesaurus".

The study can be attributed to the works that were carried out within the framework of an actively developing area of modern linguistics – migration linguistics. This is a new relevant field that focuses on the analysis of the linguistic landscape and the impact of globalization processes on its development. "The reason for the emergence of migration linguistics as an independent area in linguistic science was the massive, diverse migration movements that arise in mobile and globalizing world. Based on these global processes, language dynamics and their relevance for linguistics in general are of particular importance (SHUSTOVA, 2020).

## **Literature review**

A worldview is a holistic image of the world in the mind of a person, a multilevel phenomenon: there are different levels of generalization and representation of knowledge and, based on this, different types of worldviews. The scientific sources describe the philosophical, artistic, religious, and other worldviews. From the perspective of opposing the objectivity of scientific knowledge to subjectivity and the practical nature of everyday notions, traditionally one distinguishes between the scientific and the naïve worldview. The worldviews are also subdivided by their bearers: one can consider the worldviews of an individual, various social groups, ethnonational communities.

Along with the term "worldview" in modern linguistics, the concept of "linguistic worldview" associated with the name of Leo Weisgerber (2004) is actively functioning. The "linguistic worldview" in the scholar's concept is based on the idea of idioethnicity of linguistic content and is based on the concepts of "linguistic community" and "subjective-national nature". Language reinforces ideas about reality and forms a linguistic worldview. The linguistic worldview is "a product of consciousness that is inevitable for mental and linguistic activity, which arises through the interaction of thinking, reality, and language as a means of expressing thoughts about the world in communicative acts" (TELIYA, 1988, p. 179). Therefore, the linguistic worldview consolidates knowledge from any field and knowledge of various native speakers, thus inevitably includes elements of all the above and many other worldviews.

Usually, the linguistic worldview is studied precisely concerning the specific ethnocultural features of a particular people and correlates with large ethnocultural groups. The issues of national specificity of linguistic phenomena in the 20th century became the subject of research for several prominent philosophers and linguists, such as M. Heidegger, G. Lakoff, Yu.S. Stepanov, A. Wierzbicka, A.A. Zaliznyak, I.B. Levontina, A.D. Shmelev, O.A. Kornilov, S.G. Ter-Minasova, I.A. Sternin and many others (HEIDEGGER, 1993; LAKOFF, 1990; STEPANOV, 1997; 2007; WIERZBICKA, 1996; ZALIZNYAK; LEVONTINA; SHMELEV, 2013; KORNILOV, 2003; STERNIN, 2013). Scholars have proven that the ethnic worldview is formed based on ethnic constants, on the one hand, and value-related dominant ideas, on the other hand, a person's ideas about the world are partly conscious, partly unconscious. The ethnic worldview is not immutable. This worldview is different in distinct periods of the life of an ethnos and for certain groups within the ethnos. This is due to differences in the cultural and

value dominant ideas of people, their collective ethnosocial and individual characteristics at different spatio-temporal intervals of society development.

Linguistic worldviews include universal indicators that determine the possibility of intercultural communication as such in its various forms. The presence of universals is determined by the objective unity of human experience, the world around us and man as a living organism, and cultural and linguistic connections of peoples that establish common value orientations. At the same time, the material and spiritual culture of the people, the values, social structure, natural and climate conditions, and general mentality determine the uniqueness of the linguistic worldview within the framework of a particular culture. Therefore, there is no universal worldview: each national linguistic worldview is original and unique, that is, "the result of the reflection of the objective world by the everyday (linguistic) consciousness of a particular linguistic community, a particular ethnic group" (KORNILOV, 2003, p. 112). Moreover, it is the linguistic reflection that often helps to capture the originality of the national worldview of a particular people. The worldview cannot be considered in isolation from human consciousness and its ability to structure the ideas about reality.

As mentioned above, the study was carried out within the framework of an emerging independent field – migration linguistics. The object of migration linguistics is the language of migrants, modeling of dynamic linguistic processes caused by migration processes, and modeling of migration discourse (KRASNOBOROVA, 2020; MENSHAKOVA *et al.* 2020; SHUSTOVA *et al.*, 2020).

One of the main tasks of the field, along with identifying spatially specific and contact linguistic aspects of the interaction between languages of different ethnic groups, describing the interaction of national, majority languages and language enclaves, developing a typology of language enclaves, characterizing the positive and negative linguistic aspects of mobility of ethnic groups, modeling linguocultural polyphony of language the picture of a migrant is the harmonization of relations between ethnic groups. In terms of the study, this task can be reformulated as follows: how positive or negative are the associations that arise in Russian informants when they perceive the phrase "migrant children"; whether there is an aggression on the part of the titular nation and migrants and, if there is, how it is expressed in the language.

Naturally, migration is associated with the problems of intercultural communication. The increase in migration flows exacerbated existing problems and created new ones; the most important of which are ensuring productive cross-cultural interaction and building a multicultural society. At the same time, without rejecting the need to solve global problems that arise in the language due to large migration flows, we focused on modeling the conceptual field

of the notion of "migration", or rather on a fragment of the migration discourse, the image of migrant children that exists in the naive minds of young native speakers.

One of the most popular methods for identifying indicators of linguistic consciousness (individual and collective) is a free association experiment. Associations obtained in such an experiment arise under the influence of two factors: 1) certain characteristics of the stimulus word itself (linguistic factor); and 2) "pragmatic", that is, the influence of the subject's personality. The process of association is interesting because it is dual, as, "on the one hand, by associating, an individual reproduces personal experience, on the other hand, a repetitive typical, that is, linguistic and social experience" (PAUTOVA, 2007, p. 150). Consequently, based on the spontaneous associations arising in the subject, one can speak about the individual features of perception, and about the features of the perception of reality by a certain community/group of people.

## Methods

In the study, we used one of the types of an association experiment – a free experiment. Such an associative experiment requires the complete absence of any restrictions for the subjects who respond to the stimulus word with the first word-reaction that comes to mind.

The subjects were 148 people from 18 to 49 years old, with secondary and higher education, receiving higher education (students), and living in Russian cities (Perm, St. Petersburg, Magnitogorsk, Nizhnekamsk, Kazan, Moscow, Novosibirsk, Izhevsk). The informants were asked to respond with the first word/phrase that came to their minds in response to the stimulus "*Migrant children*". Thus, we tried to identify the components of the conceptual field of the notion of "migrant children" and its linguistic representations in the naive minds of native speakers, in other words, a fragment of the image of the world that reflects representations that native speakers are unaware of. We believe that the analysis of the meanings behind a certain word allows one to identify socially conditioned, common and different components in the cognitive base of the communicant as a representative of the sociocultural community. Both women and men took part in the experiment, but gender-related features were not considered, since this is not part of the objectives of this study.

The association experiment has long been recognized as a reliable way to study the content of a native speaker's linguistic consciousness. Adhering to the anthropocentric approach, we consider the meaning of the word to be a dynamic, mobile formation that depends on many factors. A word always has properties of different correlations: the meaning of a

spoken word is mediated by a system of general cultural ideas adopted in a particular society as well as a personal system and a language system. The semantic field is "an indissoluble unity of meanings and senses, processes and results of the cognitive-discursive activity of individuals and society: one does not exist without the other, which ensures the dynamic continual nature of the meaning of the word" (KURGANOVA, 2019, p. 26).

As a response, we received a word (for example, *Poor*), or several individual words (*Small, alienation, language*), or a phrase (*Displaced child*), or a sentence (*Children of parents who are subject to forced resettlement and move to another place*), 145 reactions in total (3 refusals). A quantitative analysis of the material obtained in the free association experiment makes it possible to form an associative-verbal micro-field of the notion of "*Migrant children*".

## Results and discussion

As one had to respond with the first associate that came to mind, there were not many micro-fields of the concept in our material. Analysis of the reactions made it possible to distinguish three micro-fields, which we designated as:

- 1) Those who came from another country;
- 2) Emotions, feelings, assessments;
- 3) Life realities.

The first group included the reactions: *Children of parents who moved from their country / Newcomers, not by choice / Children who moved to another place for permanent residence / Children who are forced to move with their parents. They have no choice.*

The second group included associations: *Pity, incomprehensibility, rejection / Children without childhood / New acquaintances / Ordinary child, newcomer / Uncertainty, hope / Rich / Shameless.*

The third group consisted of answers: *New school, difficulties in communicating with peers, miss old friends / Transportation, new educational institution / Children, schoolchildren, new school, language difficulties.*

We will divide the associations into three groups; quantitative data is presented in Table 1.

**Table 1** – Micro-fields of the concept "migrant children"

	Micro-field		
	Those who came from another country	Emotions, feelings, assessments	Life realities
Indicators	88	45	12
	60.0%	31.7%	8.3%

Source: Devised by the authors

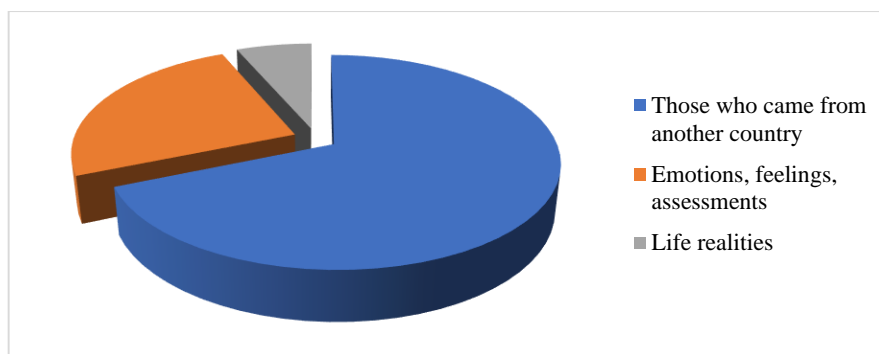
The predominance of reactions that contain the following sentence "*Those who came from another country*" seems to be natural. These reactions comprise 60%. Migration is (predictably) associated by respondents with moving, resettlement, road, travel, which is explained by the meaning of the word "migrant" – a person who has moved somewhere. The verbal action of "moving" is represented by such verb forms as *fled, moved, emigrants, those who left, fled, were forced to leave*.

In second place, in terms of the number of reactions (31.7%), were the reactions from the group "*Emotions, feelings, assessments*". As it seems, this group should manifest the classification of all people through the linguistic and cultural opposition FRIENDLY – FOREIGN. The conceptual perception of FRIENDLY and FOREIGN is practically unchanged for the linguistic consciousness of a person of all times. Their ancient implementation was first described by É. Benveniste within the opposition "free – slave, stranger, foreigner". Lexemes with the meaning of "foreigner" in some Indo-European languages included the meaning of "enemy" (BENVENISTE, 1995). Retaining its significance over the centuries, the dichotomy of FRIENDS – FOREIGNERS is a cultural constant, one of the most important oppositions in the life and structure of society (STEPANOV, 1997, p. 480). However, the stimulus word "Children" does not evoke such associations: on the contrary, migrant children evoke feelings of compassion and pity (reactions *Miss old friends / Difficult childhood / Ordinary child, newcomer / Poor things / Disenfranchised*). Although there are negative assessments (for example, *Shameless*).

In third place in terms of number (8.3) was the group with the working name "*Life realities*". This micro-field is usually made up of realities associated with language difficulties, schooling, adaptation. There is no reflection of any axiological concepts, emphasis on OTHER traditions and customs, FOREIGN faith in the answers of our subjects. We explain this fact by the semantic dominance of the stimulus word (children). All reactions in the micro-field can be

assessed as neutral since they do not contain any connotations, they are ascertaining characteristics. For clarity, let us draw a chart (Fig. 1).

**Figure 1** – The semantic field of the notion of "migrant children"



Source: Devised by the authors

Let us consider our material in terms of positive/negative/neutral associations. We shall consider such associations as *Ordinary children / New acquaintances / In need of support / Defenseless people* as positive; *Dirty / future masters of the country / Shameless* as negative; and *Children-travelers / Children crossing the borders of certain territories / Children, schoolchildren* as neutral. The results are presented in Table 2. For clarity, let us draw a chart (Fig. 2).

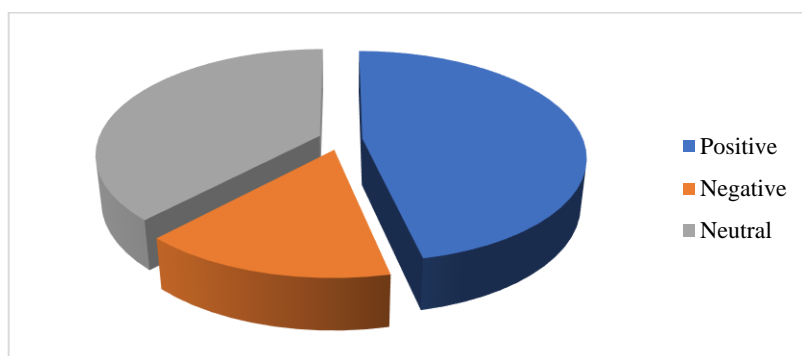
**Table 2** – Informants' associations from the perspective of connotative traits

Connotation	Indicators
1. Positive	46.6%
2. Negative	15.4%
3. Neutral	38.0%

Source: Devised by the authors



**Figure 2** – Connotative nature of informants' assessments in comparison



Source: Devised by the authors

As one can see, 46.6% of the responses given by the informants have positive connotations; in second place are neutral responses (38.0%); in the third place – negative (15.4%).

The data indicate a generally benevolent attitude of the subjects towards migrant children. It is worth remembering that our respondents are the young and middle-aged generation of Russians who, in our opinion, are capable of adequately assessing the surrounding reality. Because of this, the data obtained can be assessed as really reflecting the attitude of Russians to the phrase-stimulus and the phenomenon designated by it.

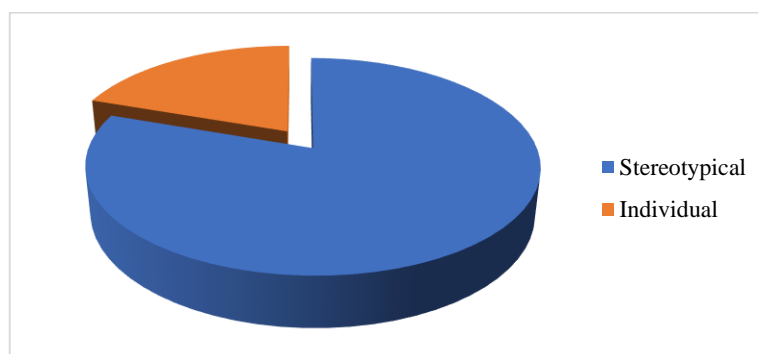
Another aspect that aroused our interest was the consistency of associations of 148 subjects. We shall consider reactions in terms of stereotypical and individual responses. Stereotypical responses shall include *Foreigners, a new place of residence / Children of parents who fled to another country / Children of newcomers*. Individual reactions are *Orphans / Difficult acclimatization / Cultural identity*. The quantitative data are presented in Table 3.

**Table 3** – Informants' associations from the perspective of their stereotyped thinking/individuality

Associations	Indicators
1. Stereotypical	80.2%
2. Individual	19.7%

Source: Devised by the authors

**Figure 3** – Stereotypical/individual associations in comparison



Source: Devised by the authors

The data obtained indicate a consistent assessment of the concept of "migrant children". Namely, 80.2% of the answers contain the same semantic component (as a rule, these are *just children and those who have moved*); 20% of reactions reflect an individual view of the problems of migrant children: some see these children as talkative; some see them as orphans, and others as future masters of the country. The outlined aspect, it seems to us, is undoubtedly interesting; but a more comprehensive study is needed for convincing conclusions.

## Conclusion

Analysis of the results of the association experiment leads to the following conclusions. Research that synthesizes various approaches and directions of modern linguistics is becoming increasingly relevant; this also applies to various aspects of interpenetration and intersection of linguistic cultures. The studied associations from 148 informants to a stimulus testify to a rather coherent and typically structured image of the concept of "migrant children" formed in the naive minds of Russian informants. The predominance of positive connotative meanings and neutral characteristics in the concept of "migrant children" makes it possible to argue that the attitude of Russian respondents to such a component of migration as children is tolerant (and, let us note, even sympathetic). We believe that this is a manifestation of tolerance, awareness, and understanding of the problems of bearers of other cultures, languages, and religions.

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### How to reference this article

SHUSTOVA, S. V.; CHERNOUSOVA, A. S.; SHLYAKHOVA, S. S.; SHESTAKOVA, O. V.; PRIDCHINA-GERSHKOVICH, M. A. Linguistic representation of the notion "migrant children" in naive consciousness of native Russian speakers. **Rev. EntreLínguas**, Araraquara, v. 7, n. esp. 4, e021084, Nov. 2021. e-ISSN: 2447-3529. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.29051/el.v7iesp.4.15631>

**Submitted:** 09/02/2021

**Required revisions:** 20/05/2021

**Approved:** 05/09/2021

**Published:** 20/12/2021