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The models of time in contemporary humanities

The models of time described in contemporary humanities are under discussion in the article. One of important problems, discussed in these works is the problem of correlation between «natural» and «social» time. «Natural» time is represented as cyclical, based on personal perception of natural cycles, and personal time («lived time») is described as linear. These models are added by perceptual and conceptual models which are varieties of subjective time. Conceptual time is an abstract time; it is extremely generalized. Perceptual time is perceived by human senses; it plays an important role in the process of reality reflection.

Keywords: time perception, cyclic and linear time, natural and social time, perceptual and conceptual time, subjective and objective time, temporary terms.

Е. Ю. Позднякова. Модели времени в современных гуманитарных исследованиях

В статье рассматриваются модели времени, описываемые в современных гуманитарных исследованиях. Одной из важных проблем, поднимаемых в данных работах, является проблема соотношения природного и социального времени. «Природное» время представляется как цикличное, основанное на восприятии природных циклов человеком, а время, переживаемое личностью, описывается как линейное. Эти модели дополняются концептуальной и перцептуальной моделями, представляющими собой разновидности субъективного времени. Концептуальное время – время абстрактное, понятийное, предельно обобщенное; в то время как перцептуальное время – это чувственно воспринимаемое время, которое играет большую роль в процессе отражения человеком объективной действительности.

Ключевые слова: восприятие времени, цикличное и линейное время, природное и социальное время, перцептуальное и концептуальное время, субъективное и объективное время, темпоральные термины.

In the end of the XX – the beginning of the XXI century the studies of space and time and their reflection in language were updated. This problem is not new, but in contemporary studies the relationships

between the man and the world are described from a different point of view. The innovative anthropocentrist approach in the humanities is focused on a lot of new questions such as:

how people understand the world;

how they represent the reality;

how the person perceives the surrounding world.

The scientists' interests have shifted from the study of macro-level structures (language, society, and nation) to the micro-level (man). It leads to «anthropologization» not only in linguistics, but also in history and culture. However, the appeal to the man, to his personal experience in the humanities comes back to the first half of the XX century. Thus, the formation of the history of daily life, one of the most popular fields of historical research now, refers to the French school «Annals» founded by Lucien Febvre and Marc Bloch [2]. The turn to understanding of history as «science about people in time» refers to 1929, when the publication of journal «The annals of economic and social history» («Annales d'histoire économique et sociale») began.

Among the first British historians, who turned their attention to the man, to the story of his daily life, was E. P. Thompson, who wrote «The making of the English working class» in 1963. In the article «Time, work-discipline and industrial capitalism» [8] E. P. Thompson turns to the problem of transformation of «lived» time into abstract clock-time. Clock time is considered as a part of the process by which doing becomes indifferent to itself: part of the transformation of doing into labour. E. P. Thompson writes: «It is commonplace that the years between 1300 and 1650 saw within the intellectual culture of Western Europe important changes in the apprehension of time» [8, p. 56]. In the past the measurement of time was commonly related to familiar processes in the cycle of work or domestic chores, it depended on the natural rhythms of life. Now the abstraction of time is inseparable from the abstraction of labour. Time is beginning to become money, the employer's money, writes the historian.

The problem of time perception is also under discussion in linguistic research. There is a specific correlation between «natural» and «social» time. «Natural» time is represented as cyclical, based on personal perception of natural cycles, and personal time is described as linear, «divided by "the point of presence" into the past, the future

and the present, that connects them into a single stream» [1, p. 688]. «If the sense of time is based on the perception of natural cycles, the mental structures are associated with linear time», points out N. D. Arutiunova [1, p. 688]. «In these two models the category of time is presented as a conceptual and linguistic (or linguaculturological) category, which expresses the abstraction of time, existing in man's consciousness and in culture» [6, p. 19]. These models, traditionally studied by historians (E. P. Thompson), culturologists (N. A. Berdiaev, A. I. Gurevich, etc.) and linguists (N. A. Arutiunova, N. S. Sergieva, E. V. Paducheva, V. I. Postovalova, E. S. Yakovleva, etc.), are added by subjective and objective models of time.

In the early XXth century Edward Sapir and Benjamin L. Whorf noted that the perception of the category of time is relative. It mostly depends on the language and language habits of a social group. E. Sapir states that human beings do not live in objective world alone, nor alone in the world of social activity, but are very much at the mercy of the particular language which has become the medium of expression for their society [5, p. 131]. The «real» world mostly depends on the speech community, its language habits and linguistic systems in our minds. B. Whorf wrote: «Concepts of "time" and "matter" are not given in substantially the same form by experience to all men but depend upon the nature of the language or languages through the use of which they have been developed» [10]. The author divides the subjective sense of time as «something becoming later and later» and the objectified or imaginary representation, in which «concepts of time lose contact with the subjective experience of "becoming later" and are objectified as counted quantities, especially as lengths, made up of units as a length can be visibly marked off into inches. A "length of time" is envisioned as a row of similar units, like a row of bottles» [10]. In his opinion, in Standard Average European (SAE) languages the present and the future are thought as «places», and time is a path linking them. Other languages, for example, Native American languages, are oriented mostly towards process. Contemporary linguists also indicate the relativity of perception of time and space linking this feature with anthropocentricity, «when the reference point is not immanent space and time, but a person's location in space; time flows, but in different models of the world this process is perceived and interpreted differently» [9, p. 75].

The differentiation between subjective and objective time goes back to the scientific interpretation of this concept, according to which space and time are the forms of existence of moving substance, while «... in advance the only real time was recognized the “absolute” time of Newtonian mechanics, reflecting the features of mechanical motion, and the phenomenon of time – such as it is given to a man – was related to this absolute time of Newtonian mechanics as his subjective experience» [4, p. 322–323]. However, in contemporary conceptions there are absolutely different structures of time, time depends not only on the phenomenon of objective reality (the movement of planets around the Sun), but also on subjective experience (events of human life). S. L. Rubinstein points out that «subjectively experienced time is not only apparent, imaginary time of moving substance, which is inappropriately reflected by a human in his experience, but it is the relative time of life (behavior) of this system – a human, that quite objectively reflects the life plan of a person» [4, p. 323].

Subjective time includes the perceptual and conceptual models of time, which represent the variety of subjective time. Conceptual time is an abstract time; it is extremely generalized. Perceptual time is perceived by human senses; it plays an important role in the process of reality reflection. E. P. Thompson believes that «no culture re-appears in the same form» and the return to the traditional perception of time is impossible. The historian states, «if men are to meet both the demands of a highly-synchronized automated industry, and of greatly enlarged areas of “free time”, they must somehow combine in a new synthesis elements of the old and of the new, finding an imagery based neither upon the seasons nor upon the market but upon human occasions» [8, p. 96]. Is it possible to have this kind of synthesis? Scientists don't have a definite answer to this question, neither has E. P. Thompson.

Nevertheless, we should note that according to linguistic studies described models of time coexist and complement each other in the Russian language (and in the Russian culture as a whole). E. S. Yakovleva writes that «the perception of life as localized outward is replaced, or rather added with the perception of life in the categories of inner reflection which necessarily involves personal orientation» [11, p. 66]. E. S. Yakovleva also points out that there are two variants of perception of life – external and internal – and they both are

connected with time and time-terms: «Hour (as well as moment, minute, second) is projecting the events in the inner world: mental, spiritual, which is presented in the system of temporary specifiers, they are intended to describe the mental plan of life. Day (as well as days, times, epoch, years) describes the external world: social, age, natural, cultural and historical aspects; the members of this list are the representatives of a “real” life plan» [11, p. 65]. We may add that the perception of life is closely connected with the perception of time, «time is inseparable from a man, but a man is inseparable from time» [1, p. 688], so the category of time can also be considered as external and internal time.

N. S. Sergieva notes that «the distinction between conceptual and perceptual models does not mean their contradiction. Both models belong to the person as a subject of cognition, perception and action» [6, p. 19] that allows the researcher consider these models of space and time as mediated by culture and experienced by a person.

According to N. D. Arutiunova, «it is the person who is at the point of presence, which conditionally divides the time line into components, <...> the linguistic models of time can be divided into those in which the main figure is a person, and those that are focused on time itself. In the first case the time line represents the flow of life or the line of destiny; in the second – the movement of natural substances – water or air» [1, p. 689]. Models of time, correlated with the line of human destiny are referred to by linguist as the models of «Human Way», the second – the models of «Time Flow». The models of «Human Way» are oriented on person’s experience; they represent the perceptual model of subjective time. The temporary markers of this model are found in folk-conversational speech; among the most important temporary terms are the followings:

- **Time (historical):** *rus. peremiena* (‘перемена’) – ‘time (historical)’ [6, V. 3, p. 40].
- **Year:** *rus. godok* (‘годок’), *godochech* (‘годочек’) – ‘a year’ [3, p. 47].
- **Nowadays:** *rus. nonche* (‘нонче’) – ‘now, at present’ [3, p. 48].
- **Latelly:** *rus. davecha* (‘давеча’) – ‘some time ago, recently’ [3, p. 47].
- **Live:** *rus. perevekovat’* (‘перевековать’) – ‘to live smb’s life’ [6, V. 3, p. 33]; *rus. chasovat’* (‘часовать’) – ‘to count time left’ [6, V. 4, p. 208].

– **Life time and age:** *rus. bytnost' ('бытность')* – ‘a lifetime, presence’ [3, p. 47]; *rus. smaliechku ('смалечку')* – ‘since childhood, early age’ [6, V. 4, p. 96]; *rus. malionochka ('малёночка')* – ‘a girl-teenager’ [3, p. 8]; *rus. vekovukha ('вековуха')* – ‘a spinster’ [6, V. 1, p. 127].

The perception of time in folk-conversational speech depends mostly on subjective experience, for example:

– *rus. bedovat' ('бедовать')* – ‘to starve; live in poverty’ [6, V. 1, p. 50];

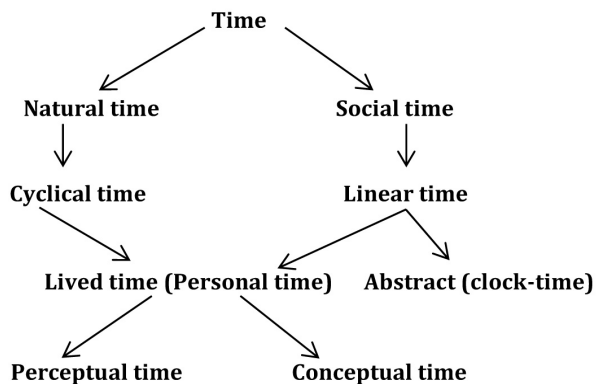
– *rus. zshit' krepko ('жить крепко')* – ‘to live rich, wealthy.’ [6, V. 2, p. 86];

– *rus. zshit' miagko ('жить мягко')* – ‘to be soft, warm, gentle with people’ [6, V. 2, p. 86];

– *rus. zshit' tolsto ('жить толсто')* – ‘to live rich’ [6, V. 2, p. 87].

The given examples show that the perception of time in folk-conversational speech is closely connected with subjective experience. The temporary terms represent the time of persons' life: times, epochs, years describe not only the external world but either the internal world of a person.

Thus, the models of natural (cyclic) and social (linear time) are recognized as the most important in contemporary researches. Social time is mediated by culture and experienced by a person.



Picture 1. The models of time

The models of perceptual and conceptual time are considered as varieties of subjective time, while personal («lived») time is opposed to abstract (clock) time (in the concept of historian Thompson)

(picture 1). The models of natural and social, external and internal, cyclic and linear time are connected in personal time experienced by a human.

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