

Language Acquisition as a Basic Metaphor for Russian Avant-Garde Poetry

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The article presents a view on the poetry of the Russian avant-garde as an expanded metaphor for language acquisition. The focus of the review is on the experiments with language and word carried out by avant-garde poets, traditionally understood a linguistic approach as a product of language creation with the status of an idiolect, and within a literary studies as an artistic phenomenon. The article describes an attempt to use a different (receptive) approach to understanding the specifics of these texts: the analysis of the results of professional and non-professional (naive) reader reception of experimental (linguistic and literary perspective) poetic texts of the Russian avant-garde predetermined the possibility of their consideration in a metaphorical context. The experience of professional reader reflection allowed us to discover similarities in the choice of language creation mechanisms used by a child during natural language acquisition and those employed by avant-garde artists in their attempt at artistic language acquisition and the construction of a new poetic worldview. During an experiment aimed at creating opportunities for the reflexive perception of the texts under consideration by non-professional readers in a situation of language acquisition, parallels were also discovered between the processes of poetic and practical language acquisition. The results of both professional and naive reader reception allow us to understand the avant-garde text, constructed using zaumi and other experimental idiolects, as a extended metaphor that reveals the processes of language acquisition and linguistic world modeling.

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Introduction. One of the specific aspects of Russian avant-garde poetics is the indivisibility of authorial intentions in the realm of artistic

creation – the direct process of generating poetic texts and language innovation, associated with attempts to construct a new language.

Determining the primacy of one of these aspects over the other proves problematic due to their close connection: the artistic-poetic fabric of a text is "programmed" by its linguistic specificity, and conversely, the linguistic form is largely determined by the overall artistic idea of the text.

Alexei Kruchenykh and Velimir Khlebnikov are representatives of the Russian avant-garde whose poetic works are distinguished by the greatest innovation in this field. The texts of these authors represent, on the one hand, a complex poetic product with an elaborate system of imagery and metaphor, and on the other hand, they are the result of linguistic experimentation, which found artistic expression in poetry. A number of significant poems by A. Kruchenykh were created using *zaum* – "a language that has no definite meaning (not fixed), a transrational language" [1: 257]; the formation of an original figurative structure in these texts occurs due to the specificity of acoustic (phonetic) arrangement. V. Khlebnikov resorted to various occasional individual authorial languages, which in his legacy, according to the research of V.P. Grigoryev, are represented in 53 variants with varying degrees of semantic diffuseness (the ratio of semantic and asemantic components) [2: 116]. Central among V. Khlebnikov's languages is the "star language," created in the search for a universal "world language" understandable to all [3: 321].

Despite the avant-garde artists' articulated commitment to the clarity and accessibility of perception of "new" languages, the necessity of reflecting on texts created using *zaum*, star language, and other specific languages of the Russian avant-garde presents a challenge for both the non-professional reader (including a philology student or a language learner) and the professional reader (including a philologist/teacher). The definitions of professional and non-professional reader are used hereafter to describe opposing reader positions: professional reading presupposes a meaningful and competent approach, as G.M. Pervova points out, a "professional reader <possesses> reading erudition, theoretical-

literary, bookish, and bibliographical knowledge, <...> skills of evaluation and interpretation of works, creative and linguistic skills" [4: 14]. Consequently, a professional reader is more often a philologist, i.e., a person with specialized knowledge and particular reading skills. All other readers who do not possess these knowledge and skills (or those readers whose specialized knowledge and skills are in the process of formation/not fully formed – for example, students learning a language and acquiring philological competence) can be included in the category of non-professional readers.

Comprehending the avant-garde texts under consideration requires attention to various aspects of poetics at different levels – from the sound structure to the figurative and poetic imagery. In this regard, the question of seeking new approaches to the study of this corpus of poetic texts remains relevant. Thus, the object of analysis in the present article is the "*zaum*" poetry of the Russian avant-garde (texts by V. Khlebnikov, A. Kruchenykh); the subject of analysis is the metaphor of language mastery as represented in these texts. The aim of the study is to find new approaches to understanding and examining the specifics (including the peculiarities of metaphors) of Russian avant-garde poetic texts constructed using "*zaum*."

Research Methods. Various approaches to studying texts created using the idiolects of the Russian avant-garde have been developing in philology directly from the moment these idiolects themselves emerged. The foundations of the linguistic approach were laid in the works of V.B. Shklovsky, who proposed considering *zaum* as a speech phenomenon [5: 57]. This line of research was continued by R.O. Jakobson, who also recognized the status of a linguistic fact for avant-garde idiolects, particularly the languages of V. Khlebnikov [6: 275] and developed in a number of contemporary works, notably by A.N. Chernyakov, who, by comparing the linguistic theories of A. Kruchenykh and V. Khlebnikov, concludes that *zaum* possesses both material (speech) and ideal (linguistic) aspects,

allowing it to be considered a full-fledged linguistic fact [7: 709].

Within another approach, zaum is considered a phenomenon of avant-garde poetics, which is reflected in various classical and modern literary studies, for example, N.O. Nilsson, who reveals the status of zaum as an artistic device that defines the structure of a poetic text [8: 86], or S. Biryukov, who views zaum text as a product of a special "transformpoetics" that generates a "hypothesis of meaning" within the text [9: 73].

This article describes an attempt to implement a different approach to understanding the phenomenon of zaum and to reviewing avant-garde poetic texts created by A. Kruchenykh and V. Khlebnikov using their own idiolects. The chosen approach can be conditionally termed "receptive," based on the interpretation of the results of both professional and naive (non-professional) reader reception of the texts under study. The results of non-professional reception were obtained through the analysis of texts by a professional reader (the author of this work), while the results of non-professional (naive) reader reception of avant-garde poetic texts were obtained during an experiment conducted with a focus group of foreign philology students.

Research Findings. One of the possible effects arising within the professional reception of "zaum" (transrational) avant-garde texts is the effect of reader "involvement" in the process of poetic creation and language creation: perceiving the author's neologisms, original sound combinations, and other components of "zaum" texts, and attempting to semanticize them and integrate them into an imagery, the professional reader inevitably discovers certain patterns related to the influence of the mechanisms that poets employed during their language creation. Even within the scope of initial reception, in such a situation, for example, the word-formation models used by poets in creating neologisms and occasional nominations for artistic images become evident, as do some principles of phonetic selection underlying the organization of sound in avant-garde verse. The described techniques and mechanisms, on the one hand, are

specific and original within the context of the works of the authors under consideration. On the other hand, the productivity and replicability of these techniques and mechanisms allow them to be integrated into a wide range of existing language acquisition practices. A detailed understanding of such parallels, presented below, allows us to consider the facts of avant-garde language creation (in particular, the poetic texts of A. Kruchenykh and V. Khlebnikov) as an extended metaphor for language acquisition, which proves to be fundamental for "zaum" avant-garde poetry.

Many of the linguistic mechanisms found in avant-garde texts are employed not only in poetic language creation but also in the actual process of language acquisition. Diverse evidence for this has been compiled by K. Chukovsky, who researched children's speech. To understand these parallels, let's consider a few examples.

(1) V. Khlebnikov's well-known poem "Incantation of Laughter" (as well as a number of the poet's other poems, for example, "Black Lyubir") contains a group of lexemes with the root --smeh- (-smeh- / -sme-) built according to regular word-formation models, such as *smekbach*, *smeyal'no*, [10: 209], *smekbotchestvo* [10: p. 95], and others. In children's speech, as K. Chukovsky records, occasional lexemes belonging to this cluster are also present, particularly in the example "I felt so sour in my mouth from mischief, from laughter" [11: 12]. Examining these texts, one can also note some parallels in the use of word-formation mechanisms: cf. *rassmeshishche* (also by V. Khlebnikov) and *mamishche* and others (in children's speech) [11: 270], *smeyunchiki* (also by V. Khlebnikov) and *Galyunchik* (in children's speech) [11: p. 269], and so on.

In similar works of avant-garde poetry and in the facts of children's speech, the process of language creation is represented, which is a component of a global process – language acquisition. By constructing both existing and potential words, a child masters the linguistic mechanisms of their native language. The poet, retracing this path, re-acquires (or acquires anew) the language,

constructing a new poetic worldview. Taking these parallels into account allows for projecting a new optic for examining "zaum" (transrational) avant-garde texts – they can be understood as a metaphor for language acquisition, unfolding multidimensionally at various levels.

(2) Onomatopoeia is also an important component of children's speech: as K. Chukovsky points out, children are capable of independently constructing them and using them both in relevant contexts (e.g., "ava (dog) - gav") and in "inverted" contexts (e.g., "ava - meow") [11: 236]. Avant-garde linguistic experiments with language, in particular, the poetic experiments of A. Kruchenykh, also contain attempts to construct onomatopoeia, for example, in the text "Goose Spring": "te ge ne ryu ri le lyu be" [12: p. 71]. In the process of mastering various language codes (including the aforementioned code – onomatopoeia), a linguistic worldview is formed in the child's consciousness, described by these language codes; following a similar path, the poet also masters the worldview and offers new options for its linguistic comprehension. Zaum is used by avant-garde poets (just as occasionalisms are used by children) in an effort to give the most precise description of some fact / phenomenon / component of the surrounding world or to designate a fact / phenomenon / object that did not have a name before, in this case, the "zaum" text and its components become at the same time a means of forming a poetic picture of the world, and, in fact, a metaphor for linguistic world modeling: poetic images constructed with the help of zaum are built into a system that forms the basis of a poetic picture of the world, and the process of formation of this system, represented in the text, can be described as a metaphor for linguistic world modeling.

The experience of professional reception of original (including from a linguistic point of view) poetic texts by V. Khlebnikov and A. Kruchenykh allows us to identify possible approaches to understanding these texts through a system of basic metaphors related to the processes of language acquisition and linguistic world modeling; in an attempt to substantiate the

relevance of using this approach, an analysis of the experimentally obtained results of naive (non-professional) reader's reception of "zaum" poems. It seems that the most natural reflexive perception of the text as a metaphor for language acquisition becomes directly in the situation of language acquisition: in the experimental part of this study, the poetic texts of V. Khlebnikov and A. Kruchenykh were offered to foreign philology students who speak Russian at the first certification level (B1) and were directly in the situation of language learning.

The considered poetic texts were offered as educational illustrative material within the framework of the program "Linguistics: Russian language and Translation" in the 2nd year of study (course) of the discipline "Modern Russian language". The focus group included 20 students from China, Ecuador, and Turkmenistan; the foreign students who joined the focus group had not previously been familiar with Russian avant-garde poetry.

To understand the acoustic images and other phonetic aspects of the "zaum" poetry of the Russian avant-garde, the representatives of the focus group were offered the text by A. Kruchenykh "Dyr bul shchyl". According to the results of the initial reception, 90% of the participants in the experiment unambiguously identified the text as Russian (created by means of the Russian language), while more than 50% assumed that the text was created by a person whose linguistic personality is in the process of formation – a foreigner (35% of respondents) or a child (25% of respondents). Some verbal reactions that occurred during the reception also indicate that this text can be perceived by non-professional readers as a metaphor for language acquisition: (1) "when I did not know Russian, all the words sounded like this at first"; (2) "this is what a person says when he wants to speak Russian." (note: it's about imitating a Russian accent), etc. The results of reflexive perception by non-native speakers of such "zaum" texts of the Russian avant-garde (for more information about the results, see Table 1) can serve as indirect confirmation of the existence of a metaphorical

basis for these texts related to the idea of language acquisition.

Table 1. Results of non-professional (naive) reader reception of "zaum" poetic texts of the Russian avant-garde (A. Kruchenykh's poem "Dyr bul shchyl")

Recipient	Characteristics of the language in which the text was created	Characteristics of the author of the text	Results of interpretation of the figurative-thematic structure of the text
1	russian	unusual poet	text shows how the language sounds
2	russian, because there are letters ц and ы	linguist	text helps to memorize difficult letters
3	russian	foreigner	the author learns russian letters in the text
4	russian, because sounds russian	the child , he still speaks poorly,	author speaks as he knows how
5	looks like russian	person who study russian	there is an image of a difficult russian language in the text
6	the "fake" language	it was invented by children.	this text is a game.
7	russian with mistakes, because you can't write "щыл"	a person who doesn't know russian well	this text shows how to learn the language.
8	russian	foreigner or a child	there is a symbol of an unusual russian language in the text
9	russian	poet	this text is about the beautiful russian sound.
10	alien language	crazy man	this text is about strange sounds
11	russian	talented poet	this text is like a russian soul
12	russian, there are russian letters	foreigner	an unusual text about a special russian language

13	russian	little child	text about how he understands russian language
14	russian, because there are letters ы	maybe the linguist	text shows that the russian language is difficult
15	russian	maybe a child	text shows children's sounds
16	russian, but the strange	foreign student	there is a special russian image in the text
17	russian	poet	text shows the heart of the russian melody
18	russian, but there's no point	foreign	strange text, there's no point
19	russian, it looks like russian speech when you don't understand anything	foreigner who is learning to speak russian	this text is about russian sounds, how to understand
20	russian	unusual poet	this text is about how a person learns a language

Some grammatical aspects of zaum, related to the specifics of morphemics and word formation, were also considered by representatives of the focus group as part of the work with V. Khlebnikov's text "And I piped my pipe." At the initial reception stage, 60% of respondents rated the vocabulary of the text as "normal/ correct", while the rest indicated the absence of the lexeme "khotel" in Russian. At the same time, later on, at the stage of working with the text, all the participants in the focus group noted the correspondence of the neologisms to Khlebnikov's regular word-formation models, as well as the inclusion of affixes existing in the Russian language in the morphemic composition of these neologisms. The reactions that arose

during the reception also testify to an understanding the nature of the processes represented in V. Khlebnikov's text: (1) "when I started learning the language, I also made words myself that look like real Russian words," (2) "the words that he (Khlebnikov) made are similar to the Russian language, it works like a language", (3) "he does this because there is an object, but there is no word", etc. The idea of using a neologism as a means of filling a gap in the worldview was also widespread during the reception (for more information about the results, see Table 2).

Table 2. The results of a non-professional (naive) reader's reception of the "zaum" poetic texts of the Russian avant-garde (V. Khlebnikov's poem "And I piped my pipe")

Recipient	Characterization of the text (from the so-called language)	Results of interpretation of the figurative specificity of the neologism
1	Ordinary Russian text	-

2	Beautiful Russian text, there are old words	-
3	This is poetry, Russian poems	-
4	In this text there is an unusual word "khotel"	The author came up with this word because there is no in Russian language, but he wanted to
5	These are normal words in poetry	-
6	Russian text, but the word "khote" is not spoken in Russian	This word was made because there are similar Russian words, it is interesting
7	All the words are ordinary, but "khotel" is an unusual word	They added such a word so that the poem would be better and (have) a beautiful sound
8	A beautiful poem, I understand	-
9	Interesting words in this poem	-
10	I do not know the word "khotel", it is unusual	I think this word is unusual, it was made by a poet, because "pipe" is, but "khotel" is not
11	«There is a mistake here – not "khotel", but "khotet"	I think the author made a mistake
12	Beautiful text, I like it	-
13	It is Russian poetry	-
14	The unusual word "khotel", I think, was made by the author – like "metel"	The author wrote such a word, because there is a "khotel" in the world and it is necessary to say so
15	This text is ordinary	-
16	This text is interesting	-
17	It seems to me that there is a word that the author made – "khotel"	It is a beautiful word, it makes the poem better
18	I understand the text well	-
19	I think it's a beautiful text, the author creates a lot, made the word "khotel"	The word "khotel" looks like Russian words, it helps to feel the mood of the poem better
20	This text is unusual, but clear and beautiful	-

Based on the results of the review of the results of this part of the experiment, it can be concluded

that the reflexive perception by non-professional foreign readers of the results of avant-garde

linguistics can also act as indirect evidence of the permissibility of understanding poetic texts using avant-garde idiolects, not only through the metaphor of language acquisition, but also through the metaphor of linguistic world modeling.

Discussion. It seems that the experimental results obtained during the analysis of professional and non-professional readers' reception of poetic texts of the Russian avant-garde, constructed using "zaum", can expand the range of ideas formed in modern philology about the texts under consideration. Understanding the poetry of Russian avant-gardists through the prism of metaphors of language acquisition and linguistic world modeling opens up new interpretative possibilities for various avant-garde studies.

It is also possible that the practice of using a receptive approach to work with avant-garde poetry may be relevant in various philological contexts - research, located at the junction of poetics and cognitive linguistics, as well as didactic context, oriented towards the practical use of texts in the teaching of literature and language (including Russian as a foreign language). For the participants of the experiment (foreign speakers studying Russian), familiarity with the original "zaum" poetic texts served as an educational and motivational stimulus – a situation of understanding the process of language acquisition through an artistic text; it seems that the amplification of this practice can also be productive.

Conclusion. The experiments with language and word presented in Russian avant-garde poetry, traditionally interpreted either as a linguistic fact

(language (idiolect) / product of linguistics), or as an artistic phenomenon, can also be considered as a detailed metaphor for language acquisition. The use of a receptive approach to working with these texts and the analysis of professional and non-professional reader reactions serve as a justification for the possibility of such a (conditionally "metaphorical") focus of consideration: (1) a professional reader, the corpus of "zaum" (constructed using Zaum and other similar idiolects) of avant-garde texts can be understood through comparison with the corpus of facts of children's speech. – Such a comparison reveals similarities in the choice of language-writing mechanisms used by the child in the course of language acquisition and used by the poet in an attempt to artistically master the language and form a new (occasional poetic) linguistic picture of the world. (2) an non-professional reader in a language-learning situation, these texts can also be perceived as a product of existing language mechanisms and the implementation of regular models, the attention to which is especially great at the stage of language acquisition, (3) the results of both as a professional and naive (non-professional) readers' receptions allow them to comprehend the avant-garde "zaum" text(s) as a detailed metaphor that reveals the processes of language acquisition and the formation of a linguistic picture of the world (linguistic world modeling).

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