REFLECTIONS ON THE CONCEPT OF LINGUISTIC IMAGINARY

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ABSTRACT. *Reflections on the Concept of Linguistic Imaginary*. Our reflections on the concept of linguistic imaginary (LIM) have been triggered by the question whether or not the metalinguistic perspective initially granted to LIM – according to which LIM matches the speaking subject's representations *on* the language – may represent a rather restrictive comprehension formula, thus limiting the operational potential of a concept otherwise capable of covering a larger area of research. Therefore, in addition to presenting the 'classical' perspective on LIM, quite well-known and exploited in certain linguistic circles in Romania, we will provide a further latent perspective, as suggested by ethnolinguistics and cognitive linguistics. Our present approach aims to exploit the potentiality of such a generous and prolific concept, able to include, from our point of view, the speakers' world-representations (which obviously include the language-representations as well), encoded **in** and **by** the language facts. From such a perspective, the language would be both the object of representation and its essential vector, LIM being part of the cultural imaginary which is expressed in concrete linguistic data at various language levels, mostly at lexical level. As a result, the concept of LIM would significantly expand and become more flexible, thus generating some new, dynamic interdisciplinary research fields.

Keywords: cultural imaginary, linguistic imaginary, metalinguistics, subjective norms, objective norms, ethnolinguistics, linguistic representation of the world, linguistic stereotype, cognitivism.

REZUMAT. *Reflexii despre conceptul de imaginar lingvistic.* Reflexiile noastre pe marginea conceptului de imaginar lingvistic (IML) pornesc de la întrebarea dacă nu cumva accepțiunea metalingvistică dată inițial IML – prin care acesta este identificat cu reprezentările subiectului vorbitor *despre* limbă – reprezintă o formulă de înțelegere prea restrictivă, limitând potențialul operațional al unui concept care ar putea acoperi o arie mult mai largă de investigare. De aceea,

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pe lângă prezentarea concepţiei „clasice" asupra IML, destul de bine cunoscută şi exploatată în anumite cercuri de lingvişti din mediul românesc, vom aduce în discuţie şi o altă posibilă accepţiune, sugerată de cercetările de etnolingvistică şi de lingvistică cognitivă. Scopul demersului nostru îl constituie dorinţa de a exploata întreg potenţialul acestui concept generos şi prolific, capabil, din punctul nostru de vedere, să înglobeze şi reprezentările despre lume ale subiecţilor (care conţin, evident, şi reprezentările despre limbă), încifrate **în** şi **prin** fapte de limbă. În această accepţiune, limba nu ar mai constitui doar obiectul reprezentării, ci şi vectorul esenţial al acesteia, IML incluzând şi acea parte a imaginarului cultural exprimat în date lingvistice concrete la diferite niveluri ale limbii, dar mai ales la nivel lexical. Astfel, accepţiunea conceptului de IML s-ar lărgi considerabil, iar perspectiva asupra acestuia ar deveni mai flexibilă, oferind posibilitatea deschiderii unor direcţii de cercetare interdisciplinară mult mai generoase.

Cuvinte cheie: imaginar cultural, imaginar lingvistic, metalingvistic, norme subiective, norme obiective, etnolingvistică, reprezentare lingvistică a lumii, stereotip lingvistic, cognitivism.

0. Argument[2]

Our reflections on the concept of LIM have been generated by the 2017-launch of the project *The Encyclopaedia of Imaginaries in Romania. Historical Heritage and Cultural-Linguistic Identities* [*Enciclopedia imaginariilor din România. Patrimoniu istoric şi identităţi cultural-lingvistice*], whose concrete target, among others, was the publishing of five volumes on the linguistic, literary, religious, historical and artistic imaginary. One volume, entitled *Romanian Heritage and Linguistic Imaginary*, would thus focus on a certain type of imaginary, still unfamiliar and rather debatable in Romania. As an illustration, Sanda-Maria Ardeleanu points out that, despite the early appearance (in the '70s) of the LIM concept among the language sciences, followed by the foundation of the real LIM theory, most Romanian socio-/psycho-/linguists regard it in disbelief, quite intrigued by the syntagm *linguistic imaginary*. Moreover, doubting its authenticity, such sceptics have even labelled LIM as "phantasm" or "a speculative invention" which provides no real ground for solid research (Ardeleanu, 2013a: 5). However, there have been a few enthusiastic Romanian researchers whose approach to LIM is more flexible and creative, and who have felt bound to outline a theoretical framework allowing the analysis

of languages from a larger perspective. Sharing the same enthusiasm, we have started to search for new directions of the linguistic theory towards the "reality of the Language", at the same time encouraged by the label "open theory" granted to LIM (Ardeleanu, 2013a: 8). Therefore, we have aimed to explore the "reality" hidden behind the notion of LIM, investigating the metalinguistic approach (which actually represented our first encounter with it), as well as the further directions provided by ethnolinguistics (EL) or cognitive linguistics (CL).

1. The metalinguistic approach to LIM

The concept of LIM, which steadily grew into an actual LIM theory, emerged in the French academic environment, once with Anne-Marie Houdebine-Gravaud's doctoral thesis, on the variety and dynamics of the French language (Houdebine-Gravaud, 1979). During the inquiries, the author observed the difficulties and the inhibitions of the speakers regarding their relation to their own language or to the others' language (the derided language, used in the neighbouring village, as opposed to the worthful language, employed by academics/ personalities, etc.). Taking into account such observations and exploiting Saussure's theory on *langue – parole*, Lacan's ideas on discourse, Labov's studies on the sociolinguistic variations and especially Martinet's research on the dynamics of languages in synchrony, Houdebine shifted focus from the language fact onto the speakers and their relation with their own language or the language of the community to which they (want to) belong as speaking/ social individuals, in order to outline the speaker's various attitudes to the language (Houdebine-Gravaud, 2002: 10).

In other words, LIM focuses on the speaker's "subjective representations" of the language. Such representations necessarily imply two fundamental operations: distancing oneself from the language and generating a meta-/epidiscourse on the language, a process during which the speakers rationalize their relation to it, thanks to a universal metalinguistic competence, based on a general cognitive device (Houdebine-Gravaud, 2013a: 11). Thus, the initial objective of LIM was the aforementioned relation speaker – language and the manner in which the speakers' opinions on language influence their linguistic productions (for instance, pronunciation), as well as the delineation of linguistic varieties within the same language („l'Unes langue"), by means of dynamic synchronic description (Houdebine-Gravaud, 2013a: 11).

Entering the complex yet slippery reality of linguistic dynamism, Houdebine tried to put things in order by "pinning" such reality in a "normative panel". Inspired by A. Rey's model from 1972, the author would retain in her own model, 10 years later, the two types of *norms* proposed by Rey: *objective norms* – derived from the analysis and the description of verbal

productions, thus from the speakers' linguistic behaviours – and *subjective norms* – delineating opinions, attitudes or judgements about the language, namely linguistic feelings or social representations. At the beginning, only the *subjective norms* were encompassed by the LIM proper[3], being further categorized as: *prescriptive norms* (referring to the ideal language, authorized by grammars, dictionaries, etc., and to (in)correctness on a normative level); *fictional norms*, stating a sort of discourse based on the speaker's subjective judgements on the language in use (different from the prescriptive norms), be they aesthetic, emotional or historical; *assessment norms*, regulating the evaluation of quality and the frequence of a certain linguistic behaviour, yet providing no value judgments[4]; *communicational norms* (subsequently added), regarding the adjustment of the speaker-norm relation to the interlocutor and to the communication context.

Perceived as too restrictive, the present panel was to be completed by other authors (Brunet-Hunault, 1996) with two further subcategories: *identifying norms* (the picture derived from a speaker's use of language) and *identity norms* (the picture imposed by the group to which the speaker belongs). Some authors rejected the very concept of *norm* (a case in point being Remysen, 2011), motivating its polysemy and vagueness, thus inappropriate in the given context; they replaced it with other concepts, such as "types of arguments" (the elements invoked by speakers on their personal relation to the language – Remysen: 62) or "types of commentaries" about the language in use (Jacquet, 2015). The advantage of such terminology is that it clearly specifies the speakers' discourse *on* the language, comprised by LIM.

Irrespective of their terminology preference, all the authors have identified a *meta-* or *epilinguistic distance*, allowing the speakers to formulate certain reflections on the language[5]. More than once has Ardeleanu underlined such an idea, by stating that "the imaginary is, beyond any doubt, a re-presentation of the language, to which it attaches and on which it focuses" (Ardeleanu, 2017: 10). Reflecting on Charadeau's studies about discourse analysis and on the main concept of "imaginaries" (in a broad sense, as pictures

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[3] Although initially Houdebine did not include the objective norms in LIM, the LIM theory subsequently expanded from native speakers' LIM to the imaginary of linguistic descriptions, namely the way the institutional discourse is approached by the subjects. Nowadays, LIM is defined not exclusively by the subjective norms, but also by the descriptive aspect of objective norms.

[4] Later, after adjusting the first version of her panel, Houdebine eliminated the assessment norms, initially considered a distinct category, taking into account that both the prescriptive and the fictional or communicational norms actually have an assessing character (Houdebine-Gravaud, 2013: 13).

[5] For example, some journalists have claimed that despite their awareness of prescriptive norms, they would often use an unconventional/ loose style in their articles, meant to address a larger category of public/ readers (cf. Jacquet, 2015).

of reality, where "reality is reconstructed by the universe of signification"), the author distinguishes between the notion of "discoursive imaginaries" (spotted in various forms of linguistic statements, yet able to be semantically regrouped) and "sociodiscoursive imaginaries" (present in a certain social group and having the status of reference norms for the group members), thus shading and relativizing the absolute subjectivism of LIM.

As a matter of fact, after reading Castoriadis's theories on the social imaginary, Houdebine, the founder of the LIM concept, who had placed the speaker in the limelight by the now famous formula "*Every speaker speaks its own language*", later became aware of the fact that the speakers' imaginary about the language could not be considered in isolation, but within the cultural community, by its historical and social heritage: "the relation to language is expressed by various images and is part of the *social* and *subjective* representations on language". On the one hand, this relation forms ideologies ("the social versant"), on the other, it forms imaginaries ("the more subjective versant") (Houdebine-Gravaud, 2002: 10). The identification of the two versants demonstrates the author's belief that the subjective attitudes become more and more complex in contact with the broader and broader sociolinguistic descriptions.

By trying to justify the concept of "language beauty", Houdebine realizes that the linguistic criteria are no longer satisfying, so LIM should be associated with a further type of imaginary, which she calls "cultural imaginary" (CIM), triggering the identification of more insightful causes of linguistic dynamics, of a historical, sociocultural, ideologic, etc. type (Houdebine-Gravaud, 2013: 17). Aware of the "cultural-depository" quality of the language, some Romanian researchers, Ardeleanu included, have claimed that CIM, "encompassing numerous aspects of the human existence (history, film, arts, environment, press)" should be part of the LIM research domain[6] (already investigating the norms and the language uses, the jargon, the neologisms, the means of enriching the vocabulary, etc.) (Ardeleanu, 2013b: 8). In another study, she mentions the same CIM "transmitted by LIM" (Ardeleanu, 2014: 74), yet rather vaguely whether or not these representations are language representations, rather than cultural representations, since in her own definition, LIM is "a theory imposing 'imaginary' representation *in* and *on* the language" (Ardeleanu, 2014: 71). Not only such observations, but also other studies associating "the language imaginary" with "the world image" (Sîmbotin: 92) have stirred up our interest for a deeper investigation into the LIM – CIM relation.

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[6] Among the most recent research topics, the following have been included in the new analysis framework: the (acceptance/ rejection) attitude towards the linguistic norms, the linguistic creativity, the role of the experts (linguists, writers, etc.), multilingualism and the effects of language contacts, the identity function of languages, the rejuvenation of regional languages, linguistic policies, LIM and CIM in literature, etc. See Pitavy for international LIM studies, and, among others, Ardeleanu 1996, 2000, 2006; Coroi 2013; Obreja 2011a, 2011b for Romanian studies.

2. LIM in an ethnolinguistic perspective (EL)

From our point of view, an attempt to reconstruct the complex "reality" behind the LIM concept must also include the results of EL research, another science preoccupied with LIM and having a long tradition especially in the Slavic countries, such as Poland or Russia, and recently, Ukraine, Belarus and the Czech Republic. Generally speaking, EL studies the relations between the popular language and the popular culture, rather than the relations between the standard language and culture (Koselak: 5); however, the actual EL research in Poland has gone beyond the naïve knowledge of the native speakers by expanding towards different types of registers: literary, standard, argotic, etc. (Porawska: 106). To a great extent, the EL[7] methods and objectives echo the American linguistic anthropology, whose objective is to describe the manner in which various world representations are reflected in the language[8]. In both sciences, the language is described as "a mediation element which filters a certain perspective on the world, an active principle which imposes certain distinctions and values on the mind", thus becoming a sort of 'depository' of the past generations' experience, able to provide the future generations with an interpretation spectrum of the world (Mounin: 42-43). In order to identify the specificity of this spectrum and the specificity of a particular language, EL aims to analyse the manner in which a certain element is conceptualized from one language to another[9].

In order to accurately grasp this conceptualization process, we will consider Humboldt's rather vague intuition about the so-called "interior form", later reformulated by one of Humboldt's most famous descendants, Leo Weisgerber. For the latter, the linguistic reality does not represent a mere reflection of the world, an outcome (*ergon)*, but also a creative force of the

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[7] Exploring Humboldt's and his disciples' philosophical theses on language (specifically the idea that language expresses thinking and words conceptualize reality), as well as Sapir's theory on the symbolic function of language (capable of "analyzing the experience-drawn data in dissociable theoretical elements and of operating, to various degrees, a fusion between virtuality and reality, thus ensuring the transfer from experience to language – Sapir, 1970: 35), EL outlines its research domain, "aiming to find the subtle differences in the world perspective of individuals belonging to different cultures and speaking different languages" (Ferry: 15).

[8] The idea that language reflects a particular world perspective underlies the now famous Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, which claims that a community's language collects and classifies its own experiences, thus generating its own *world* and *social reality* (Sapir, 1949: 162). In other words, the way in which we perceive the world depends on the language we speak, the mental representations depending on the linguistic categories.

[9] Some authors state that this is the origin of the dynamic conception on language, which evolves during the changes undergone by the language-reflected reality and by the value system of the society where such a language is spoken (Cholewa: 14).

spirit (*energeia)*, an idea present in Coșeriu's integralism as well. Taking all these into account, EL will contruct a key-concept named "linguistic image of the world" (LIW) or "linguistic representation of reality" (LRR), which includes both the linguistic contents and the linguistic activity (Cholewa: 14-15). The LRR concept, initially employed by Pisarek and later by Jerzy Bartmiński in *The Dictionary of popular linguistic stereotypes* (Bartmiński, 1980, apud Viviand: 30), matches, to a greater or a lesser extent, the American cognitivists' definition "the world conceptualization present in the language" or the Russian linguists' "the naïve image of the world, pinned in the language" (particularly Aspresjan, apud Cholewa: 21).

However, despite the common points between EL and cognitive linguistics – both consider the human as an entity, as a cultural being; both accept the principles rendered by the encyclopaedic character of semantics and are based on the prototypical categorization (Cholewa: 21) –, in what regards EL, the attempts of reconstructing LRR focus rather on the static aspect, on the *product* fixed in the linguistic data, whereas cognitive linguistics emphasizes the *process*, namely the dynamic mechanisms leading to the outcome (Mackiewicz, apud Cholewa: 21). Furthermore, contrary to cognitive linguistics, often accused of "mentalism" for its having ignored the cultural aspects involved in the linguistc creativity, EL has the advantage of having based the LRR investigation on the cultural aspects, trying to reconstruct the notional systems of various languages and especially the semantic micro-universes contained in the significance of every lexical unit.

As a matter of fact, this is the reason why EL has replaced the world *reflection* in the language with the world *interpretation* **in** and **by** the language, which corresponds to the cultural specificity of a certain language community. For the famous Polish ethnolinguist Jerzy Bartmiński, LRR[10] signifies a specific world interpretation expressed in the language, the words being no more "photographic" representations of real objects, but their "mental portrayals", enriched with semantic content, based on the human mind's segmentation and categorization of various phenomena (Cholewa: 22). Thus, LRR is the outcome of the speakers' subjective perception and their conceptualization of reality. It presents a *subjective character* (different from the world representation typical for empirical sciences, such as biology or physics), as well as an *intersubjective aspect*, derived from the social and community character (Bartmiński, apud

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[10] Other Polish ethnolinguists, Renata Grzegorczykowa (1990) included, perceive LRR as "a fixed (fossilized) conceptual structure in the language system", while Janusz Anusiewicz, explains it as a "definite modality of understanding reality through language". As argued above, Bartmiński approaches LRR as a cluster of judgements, underlining its cognitive (interpretive) nature and considering that due to its open character it should not be restricted to its fossilized elements (apud Viviand: 311).

Viviand: 32). Hence LRR bears certain collective notions on humans, objects or events, such simplified (or stereotyped) representations, shared by a certain community and included in the concept of linguistic stereotype (LS)[11], mostly appearing in word-connotations.

This detailed description of LRR concept actually explains Bartmiński's theory on LIM. From his point of view, each geolinguistically delineated community offers its own world categorization that generates certain cultural values within that community[12], which are further part of "a notional structure of reality, pinned in the language system". The very definition of LIM reveals that this punctual conceptualization pinned **in** the language is understood by Bartmiński as "linguistic imaginary"[13]: "the assembly of fixed (sterotyped) ideas about the humans and the world, able to be reconstructed from various linguistic data: the grammar system (flexional, morphological, syntactic and textual categories), the semantic system (the word-meaning or the meaning of more complex units), the usage and the "perilinguistic" elements, beliefs and attitudes, namely all the relevant data traceable during effective communication" (Bartmiński, apud Koselak: 5).

Accurately defining the LIM and LRR concepts led to further EL research, many authors aiming to reconstruct the linguistic image of some

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[11] Another EL key-concept, LS originates in sociological sciences and is included in the language system as well. Following W. Lippman and H. Putman, Bartmiński identifies LS with "the fixed, reproduced ties, not created by any needs and set in the collective memory on a concrete level, corresponding to lexemes (Bartmiński, apud Koselak: 6). Among others, Wierzbicka underlined the "shared" character of the LS community, the components of the linguistic concept being taken for granted, as *a priori* truths (cf. Cholewa: 32). In a cognitive perspective, LS is "a regulating human and linguistic activity, functioning repeatedly and whose structure is predictable" (Bartmiński, apud Koselak: 6), its outcome being a cognitive entity, far from being flexible, but well organized by specific "aspects" (Zinken apud Koselak: 6), "faces" (A. Wierzbicka) or "subcategories" (A. Koper). The obtained cognitive entity contains a central invariant, retraceable in all usages, as actual features in various contexts or rare connotations activated in poetry. Although rare, the latter fully contribute to the inherent coherence of the definite concept. Yet LS are not strictly intellectual images, but highly emotional contents, reflected by human wishes and prejudices, because social reality is not an object per se, but an image created by our mind, where it is difficult to separate fiction from reality (…). The social reality is thus a world of images with conventional and variable content, a world of stereotypes and myths" (apud Viviand: 33).

[12] Exactly such values confer the language a certain power, which functions as the basis for the identity of a culture on the brink of extinction (Bartmiński, apud Viviand: 24-27).

[13] Like the cognitivists, Bartmiński does not recognize any difference between a poetic text and a text resulted from mere performance, considering that both of them follow the same categorization and conceptualization rules. From such a perspective, he believes that literature is a particular linguistic product, which multiplies the possibilities of the natural language, its systemic "illogic" included. In his view, the poet-author, the conceptualizer only selects the words, but each word is already the bearer of a certain LIM, which makes possible the generation of a global identity image revealed by the entire text.

objects or *reality scraps* (for example, Choleva reconstructs the linguistic and encyclopaedic images of the cat and of the dog). The goal of such "profiles" is a better comprehension of the concepts (such as *cat*, *bourgeois*, *market* or *democracy*) and of the general world-categorization. They function on already formed concepts, the most eligible *aspects/faces* (cf. footnote 11) being selected and later *filled* with meanings coming from the appropriate world knowledge. This profiling aims to pinpoint the mechanisms of generating new values typical for a particular unit and its significance variants, being defined by Bartmiński and Niebrzegowska as "a subjective, linguistic-conceptual operation which creates an image of a certain object by revealing it by some of its aspects, namely its origins, features, appearance or functions" (apud Koselak: 7).

The *faces* under consideration in profiling may be (cf. Cholewa 26-29): *etymology* (the most conservative type of linguistic data, by retaining unaltered information for a long time and triggering essential consequences for word definitions and the process of derivation, idiom and proverb-formation); *grammar facts* (prone to slower changes than the lexicon, yet referring to ancient stages of language-formation, similarly to etymology); *polysemy* (implies an inventory of word-meanings, the types of meanings (mostly the abstract ones) and their relations); *derivation* (the number of derived words provides important information on the degree to which an "object" is anchored in the system, its character and its connotations[14]); *idioms* (the idiomatic domain is usually considered as the linguistic community's interest in a reality scrap); *synonyms*, *proverbs*, *connotations* (especially the cultural ones, which refer to the entire linguistic community, not only to certain groups belonging to it; such connotations, called symbolic, relate to extra-linguistic data (for instance, the dog is associated to loyalty, black, to mourning, etc.), are conventional and shared by the whole community (culturally related, white symbolizes mourning – Dyoniziac: 26); *collocations* (in spite of their low stability, they can be relevant for the open character of LS – Viviand: 26-27).

The selection and the display manner of such faces typically depend on the character of the "reality scrap" under consideration and the objectives of the description, since their role is to provide a profile, a particular way of studying the object, in terms of the world-knowledge, rationality type, system of values, etc. They reflect the studied linguistic conscience, creating the cognitive structure of a concept, which differs by the peculiarity of the objects under consideration: elements, plants, animals, social concepts, etc. As an illustration, in order to

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[14] The semantic derived words are, in J. Picoche's opinion, those words which "function like plain derived words in the absence of any morphological derivation". For example, if *falling* (Rom. noun "cădere") is derived from the verb *to fall* (Rom. "a cădea"), *to eat* can thus change to *have lunch*, *to sleep* into *take a nap*, etc. So there are families of non-morphological, purely semantic words. Apresjan calls them suppletive derived words (cf. Cholewa: 27).

profile the object "sky" or, more precisely, to outline the LIM of the "sky", the faces selected by the profiling principles may be: origin (cosmogony-related legends, beliefs, superstitions), location (up/down), oppositions (sky/earth), various qualities (firmness: the skies/ heaven; height: high in the sky), dwellers in the sky (birds, spirits), the sky as an objective and a reward, the path to the sky (the "ladder" to the skies), the sky symbolism, etc. In the case of each face, the relevant linguistic data will be gathered, typical for a certain speaking community, so that the considerations upon the LIM of an object will be more coherent and better structured than if organized intuitively.

If the selected faces can differ from one object to another (in terms of their content), the profiling of the same object may be displayed in different ways, since profiling is directly linked to categorization: as an illustration, water can be conceptualized from an ontic persective, as a natural element, or from a functional perspective, as an essential drink for living or as a magic therapeutic agent, but also relationally (related to other elements, such as wine or milk, and to the human; we may also include here the human's estimations on it).

The relevant sociocultural nature of the profiles is revealed by the recommendation of considering "cultural or encyclopaedic" information, viewed as features associated to the words, impossible to separate on the display of the linguistic image of a concept (cf. Cholewa: 34). This is the reason why most EL studies aim to reconstruct the linguistic and the encyclopaedic image of an object, since a dictionary provides only linguistic information, whereas an encyclopedia offers miscellaneous information about objects and phenomena. In a prototypical approach specific to EL, there is no straight distinction between linguistic and encyclopaedic information, as the aim is to reach "a maximum density of the category" (Cholewa: 31), by introducing all the features related, even intuitively, to the target-word (on the condition that those typical features creating the prototype should be acknowledged as "typical" by the whole speaking community, their identification thus being of utmost importance). However, usually the empirical, not the specialized knowledge, is taken into account, the former being able to become the components of the concept and to be included in a dictionary (included here is the empirical knowledge acquired by description too, namely a native speaker describes it to a non-native speaker, etc.; at least somebody can acknowledge it empirically).

The linguistic image resulted from profiling may be rather heterogenous or incoherent, because it can include several aspects and layers of analysis. A reason for such a fact is that the linguistic system changes more slowly than the society and the culture, retaining old components, nowadays obsolete. Simultaneously, "the scientific knowledge" is growing progressively, the linguistic image being constructed by various social groups, having various perspectives on the same reality scrap; as a consequence, such a linguistic image often includes several contradictory representations (Hołówka, apud Cholewa: 25-26).

Thus, a dog may be viewed from a number of perspectives: positive from the point of view of a hunter, a blind person or an old person with no family, and negative from the perspective of a farmer. At the same time, the profiling should operate a distinction between the "essential" and the "coincidental" features: in the case of the "dog" object, its essential features are semantic, those absolutely necessary for its primary definition ("animal" is a compulsory feature, whereas "loyal" represents "an added cultural charge", according to Gallison's terminology in his studies on lexiculture). Such a distinction characterizes structural semantics too, where the distinguishing linguistic features of the sememes represent exactly their essential character. For example, "white" is no distinctive feature for "swan", since this is not a necessary condition for a referent to be called swan – swans can also have other colours than white. Consequently, the feature "white" is an encyclopaedic feature of the swan, this type of features being potentially infinite, the linguistic and the semantic knowledge referring to the category, not the world (Cholewa: 30).

Wondering which language level can facilitate the LIM tracking, we will consider Sapir, who viewed the lexis as "an extremely sensitive indicator of a people's culture" (1949: 27), an opinion shared by Whorf as well. Whorf observed that there are no languages to describe similarly the same social reality, so he understood that the originality and the complexity of each collective life is mainly reflected by words. As a matter of fact, the major argument was the impossibility of translating the abstract meanings, especially because they are charged with a certain cultural implication not always translatable in other languages (cf. Dyoniziac: 27). Bartmiński also considered the lexis a real classifier of social experiments, which contains an inventory of essential concepts on the existential, social and cultural plan. For Tokarski, the lexis was highly important, "LRR representing not only an assembly of regularities contained in the grammar categories, but also in the semantic structures of the lexis, which shows the own ways of a language to observe the world components, its hierarchies and the values accepted by the linguistic community" (Cholewa: 23).

3. Conclusions

Since our introduction to the various linguistic domains has aimed to clarify, to a certain extent, the rather challenging association LIM – CIM, we can now conclude that the relation between CIM and its linguistic representations[15] has a biunivocal character. Analysing the language-culture correlation, Coşeriu considered EL a generic term implying, on the one side, "the ethnographic linguistics", which studies language and the linguistic facts conditioned by the different types of knowledge upon things, and on the other side, "the linguistic

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[15] The philosophical perspective on LIM emphasizes that language is "a mental construct included in the forms of the collective imaginary" (Sîmbotin: 112).

ethnography", which studies culture and the different types of knowledge about things, expressed by the language (Coşeriu: 135). According to Coşeriu, LIM would rather correspond to ethnographic linguistics, since it refers to a CIM encoded in language facts, which actually generates its examination (as a matter of fact, the ultimate objective of any study is to obtain anthropologic data, upon humans and their manner of relating to the world). There is also an inclusion relation between the two, LIM being only a part of CIM, which can present further manifestations to the linguistic ones (the case of visual arts, for instance). The EL recommendations for profiling the linguistic image of the world demonstrate the intimacy of the two 'forms' of imaginary, separated by methodological criteria, for a better organization of the research, rather than by their referring to different "realities". The intimacy of such a relation makes it difficult the establishing of a unique research direction, from the linguistic data to the cultural ones or the other way round, because there is always a bidirectional course, the cultural perspective having direct consequences on the language and the language contributing to a typical structuring of the cultural horizon.

If we accept Bartmiński's idea that LIM is identical to the CIM encrypted in the language facts, more exactly, in those LSs shared by the entire community, then the LIM concept will surely include, besides the speaking subject's representations *about* the language, also the collective, sociocultural representations encoded *in* the language facts. Naturally we should wonder here how rooted LRR is in the language, whether this is acquired through the language, being imposed or only suggested to the speaker. Wierzbicka insists that the deterministic version of Sapir-Whorf hypothesis cannot be entirely supported due to the fact that every language has its own means to express any content or experience whatsoever; nevertheless, languages differ by the content they suggest or express (Wierzbicka, apud Viviand: 37). Bearing in mind Sapir's opinion that the language is an authentic "guide to social reality" (1949: 162), we believe that we cannot ignore the speakers' interpretations being tributary to a sociocultural legacy, namely an entire cultural (and linguistic) heritage.

At the same time, for a precise definition of the LIM concept, we should make use of the cognitivist perspective as well, which relates to the internal mechanisms constituting the engine of linguistic creativity. Such a thing has proved that metaphors, as a phenomenon, represent a fundamental cognitive process, typical not only for poetical thinking, but also underlying the invention of new words/idioms in order to designate abstract or blurred concepts, which cannot be comprehended by appealing to the individual's direct experience (Lakoff, Johnson: 31). Out of space reasons and due to the fact that such a theory is quite well-known in Romania, we will not offer here a detailed presentation, but only our personal observations on the accurate examination of LIM in relation to a certain object of (the real or imaginary) reality, namely the simultaneous existence of three

dimensions: 1. the study of all the representations *about* the linguistic data relating to the object – the metalinguistic perspective; 2. the study of the sociocultural representations encrypted *in* the linguistic data (which may include beliefs, myths or even cultural traditions able to be "copied" or immortalized in certain idioms) – the EL perspective; 3. the study of cognitive mechanisms generating the linguistic data (*by* the language) – the cognitivist perspective. Considering that the study of meaning must appeal to extra-linguistic data, producing accurate and objective studies on LIM may seem rather demanding in comparison to other linguistic domains. Nevertheless, such studies may at all times be preferred by any researcher fond of inter- and transdisciplinary areas.

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