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Culture of the Balto-Slavic Border Area: Good/Bad in the Language Consciousness of Latgale Youth

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ABSTRACT

Recent cognitive studies on language and linguistic units lead to the conclusion that language, as a person's cognitive ability, plays a central role in processing, storing and transmitting not only various types of objective knowledge about the world but also evaluative knowledge. The topicality of the theme considered in the given article lies in the study of the specifics of the functioning of both Russian as a diaspora language and Latvian in the same cultural space of the eastern region of Latvia-Latgale. The study aims to characterize the ways in which evaluative judgments are expressed in the linguistic consciousness of young Russian and Latvian speakers on the basis of modelling and analysis of the associative field of the stimulus words *good* and *bad*. Theory and practice of associative experiment were used as a methodological basis for the study. The words *good/bad* were suggested as stimulus words. The reactions obtained as a result of the experiment were analysed according to linguistic and cultural-contextual characteristics; as well as the modelled associative fields of the stimulus words were considered as a fragment of the image of the world of the Russians and the Latvians living in the south-eastern part of Latvia, its motives and assessments. Data processing and analysis allow defining the evaluative words *good/bad* in Russian and Latvian linguistic worldviews as full-fledged evaluative categories in the perception of young Russian and Latvian speakers in Latgale, since in their linguistic consciousness, not only dictionary meaning is actualised, but also multilevel contextual connotations.

Keywords: Lingual Consciousness; Free Associative Experiment; Associative Field; Evaluation

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1. Introduction

Evaluation is conceptual in its nature, as it expresses an opinion about the real effectiveness of one or another object, while knowledge of values is a necessary precondition for successful cognitive activity of a human being, which, in its turn, determines the ability of the subject to navigate the world. Evaluative concepts confirm the complex structure of our knowledge about the world: knowledge about reality itself and its features; knowledge about the properties of values that can be manifested in various connections and relations with other objects; knowledge about various norms, as well as evaluative stereotypes that form in the public consciousness, which refer both to the objects themselves and their individual features. Evaluation is endowed with abstract features and is national in its nature. In the public consciousness, evaluation is reflected by different levels of abstraction. In everyday consciousness (in a language), evaluation is offered as a pair of antonyms good-bad.

Recent cognitive studies on language and linguistic units lead to the conclusion that “language as a cognitive human ability plays a key role in the processing, storage and transmission of various objective knowledge about the world”^[1]. In general, in linguistics, evaluation is most often understood as “the result of evaluating an individual’s performance, expressed verbally, i.e. it is reinforced in expressions or language elements in the speaker’s attitude towards the subject from a binary point of view-positive/negative”^[2].

Subjective and objective factors constantly interact in evaluation, moreover, each factor influences the evaluation of the subject and the object. Thus, the subject reveals an evaluation based on the subject’s feelings, experiences and emotions, as well as respectable reality, but the evaluation of objects requires the constant presence of a set of objective properties, i.e. descriptive features^[2]. According to N. Arutyunova, to evaluate an object, “a person must “let it flow” through him/herself: the nature of evaluation corresponds to the nature of a human. An idealized model (image) of the world does not include all its components and parameters. Evaluation shows a person as a target that the world is focused on. Its principle is: “the world exists for a human being, rather than a human being for the world”^[3].

The study of the objects and the phenomena of the natural world shows that the world around us is not chaotic but structured in a certain way based on the similarities and

differences that reveal the components of objects and events. This allows our consciousness to classify knowledge about the world as a category of system-a category of objects and events, as well as a category of relevant words.

According to N. Arutyunova, the most complete classification of the evaluation was suggested by G.H. von Wright^[3]. Von Wright considered different types of relationships that enable us to find unity in diversity. A common path is an application of the principle of genus. He classified the following evaluation: 1) evaluation of instruments: a good knife, a bad pen; 2) technical and mastery evaluation: a good employee, a good administrator; 3) impact evaluation: harmful, bad for one’s health, 4) utilitarian evaluation: good advice, a bad plan; 5) medical evaluation, which characterizes physical parameters: good health, good memory, 6) ethical evaluation: good intentions, bad behaviour.

The nature and the structure of evaluation are largely determined by the collective and the individual value system of a human, his/her perception of the world. Evaluation is often individual in its nature that is based on the similarity between objects and the impact of their characteristics on humans, as well as on random coincidences and similarities with metaphorical and metonymic comparisons. “Metaphor is a way of thinking about the world, where the acquired knowledge is first of all used to learn something new: from an unclear “fictional” concept, a new concept is formed, using the primary meaning of words and adding many associations to it”^[4].

Much of the language research is related to the analysis of verbal associations obtained through the associative experiment. The associative experiment makes it possible to study both various connections between words and mechanisms of verbal memory; at the same time, it is an “outsourcing” tool for users of different languages applied to recognise the image. In such an experiment, the associative field of one or another stimulus word is not only a fragment of human verbal memory but also a fragment of the world images, motives and evaluations of an ethnos, which are reflected in the consciousness of the “average” user of a culture^[5].

In the present work, it seems relevant to consider the signs and the semantic volume of the value categories *good/bad* in the linguistic consciousness of Russian and Latvian speakers on the basis of a free associative experiment, since such studies have not been sufficiently conducted in the

scientific environment. The specificity of the Russian language on the territory of Latvia is determined by a different linguistic environment, as a result of which the hypothesis that the Russian language lives and develops under the influence of the Latvian linguistic and cultural environment seems logical.

The Russian population on the territory of Latvia was noted in Rīga in the 13th century, and corresponding references can be found in the Polish-Lithuanian inventories of Latgale at the end of the 16th century. In the 17th century, on the territory of Latvia and on the territory of modern Daugavpils, Russian Old Believer communities emerged from immigrants fleeing from the church reform introduced by Patriarch Nikon (1652–1666)^[6–8]. From the middle of the 17th century, the development of the Russian language and culture was closely associated with the development and influence of the Latvian linguoculture, which is reflected in the calendar of national holidays and commemorative events, and which is replicated and fixed in the culture of everyday life. The results of the experiment with the stimulus words *good/bad* carried out among the Russian and the Latvian youth demonstrate models of perception and meaningfulness of evaluative categories that may coincide or be identical in the Russian and the Latvian linguistic worldviews. A comparative perspective allows us to draw a conclusion about the linguocultural features of the use of various images and their semantic content of the evaluation given to the antonymic pair *good-bad* by the Russian and the Latvian native speakers in Latgale.

In cognitive linguistics, sociolinguistics, and linguoculturology, there are numerous approaches to studying the linguistic worldview and the processes of how context influences language and how language shapes the perception of the surrounding world. Thus, Paul Rozin and a group of researchers working under his supervision, in the course of analysing a corpus of 100 million words of spoken and written English, discovered that positive words are used much more frequently than negative ones—just as it might have been expected, given that positive events occur more often^[9]. The question of determining the relationship between self-awareness, language, and society is central to a whole range of studies^[10–14].

One of the areas of the linguistic school of Daugavpils University is comparative linguistics. Within the framework

of this area, several complex studies of the linguistic worldview of the youth of Latgale are currently being conducted. Researchers have identified a range of concepts to identify a set of associations connected with them. Now, the following concepts have been reviewed and analyzed: *road, fire, low, bread*^[15–17].

The present study aims to characterize the content of the evaluative categories *good/bad* in the linguistic consciousness of the Russian and the Latvian youth in Latgale based on the analysis of the modelled associative fields of the given stimulus words.

2. Materials and Methods

In the given study, the research methods are determined by the aim of the study and the specifics of the material under consideration. To process the experimental data, a descriptive method, quantitative and statistical analysis, as well as analysis of dictionary definitions were used. The basis for the use of a free associative experiment was the assumption that a set of associations for a specific stimulus word forms a topical linguistic associative field, which has structural, lexicographic and axiological features.

In the present study, a free associative experiment was carried out with the aim of identifying the specifics of the content of the associative field of the stimulus words *good/bad* in the lingual consciousness of a definite group of society. In the experiment, there were involved young people of Latgale—12th Grade students of Daugavpils general education secondary schools and gymnasiums, as well as 1st and 2nd year students from different faculties of Daugavpils University and Baltic International Academy. The experiment was carried out taking into account three research paradigms: educational (one social group), age (18–23 years), national (Russians and Latvians). Thereafter, the method of a written questionnaire was used in the mother tongue: in the Russian language, 424 respondents (262 women and 162 men) were interviewed, but in Latvian—413 respondents (267 women and 146 men).

In the experiment, the respondents were given 2 stimulus words in their mother tongue: *good, bad* to which they had to react with any verbal reaction. The respondents were asked to write down their first reaction (word, word-combination) to the stimulus word, which came to

their mind. In the processing of the results of the experiment, all associates, including single ones, were considered. About 868 associative reactions were received from the Russian respondents (of which 120 were various reactions to the stimulus word *good* and 157 various reactions to the stimulus word *bad*, as well as 878 associative reactions were received from the Latvian respondents (of which 145 were various reactions to the stimulus word *good* and 155 various reactions to the stimulus word *bad*. From all the words associative fields of the stimulus words *good/bad* were modeled in the linguistic consciousness of the Russian and the Latvian youth.

Not a single spoiled questionnaire or refusal was received, which may be evidence of the topicality of the above-mentioned concept in the linguistic consciousness of the participants of the experiment. Conducting a questionnaire survey as part of an associative experiment required the observance of certain conditions, such as:

- lack of the respondents' interest in the results of the experiment;
- voluntary participation and anonymity;
- unlimited number of associations;
- legibility of the written associations, without reading options;
- time limit for the task.

The received reactions were analysed from a linguo-cultural point of view; and also, when processing the associations from a linguistic point of view, their formal and grammatical features were taken into account. Linguo-cultural and axiological analysis revealed additional semantic nuances of the words *good/bad* in the linguistic consciousness of the respondents.

3. Results

Conducting a free associative experiment in a contrastive aspect made it possible to analyse a certain linguistic worldview of the youth in Latgale through the prism of the evaluative category *good/bad*. The experiment was carried out in a targeted manner among young people, which allows us to talk about a new emerging linguistic worldview under the influence of a specific linguistic, cultural and political situation. The results of the study suggest the presence of an original linguistic model in the region under consideration

because of the special linguocultural status of the Russian language in Latvia: a combination of the positions of a native language, a second language, one of two languages (in a bilingual environment) and a foreign language^[18]. The uniqueness of the region is due to its border position, which determined the specifics of the historical development and the formation of the cultural context.

The uniqueness of the region is associated with its border position, which determined the specifics of historical development and the formation of a cultural context. In his article, F. Fedorov identifies several conditional periods in the history of the region associated with the change of the ethnic vector. As a result of these processes, the region, on the one hand, is formed by immigrants with a psychological complex of alien space and a behavioural complex of the conqueror, on the other hand, the border position and remoteness from the centre contributed to the formation of a multicultural model: 'The last third of the 19 century—a decade and a half of the pre-war 20 century was an era of not only rapid development of Latgale, but also the formation of the ideology of a single life, a multinational, multi-confessional, multicultural space'^[19].

According to the results of the free associative experiment, an associative field of the stimulus *good* and an associative field of the stimulus *bad* in the Russian linguistic consciousness and in parallel in the Latvian one were received. For the Russian and the Latvian respondents, the stimulus words *good* and *bad* are familiar and understandable, they possess some common features as well. Both words refer to the same part of speech (adjectives in Russian and Latvian); they are polysemous, have more than two lexical-semantic variants, can enter into syntagmatic and paradigmatic relations and represent national-cultural information.

In the associative field, all the associations received during the experiment were considered, including the following ones:

- associations in English (in Russian horror);
- regionalisms (in Latvian, lāps);
- abbreviations (in Latvian, LABS);
- slang words (in Russian, чика = chica; in Latvian, bro).

The associative fields in both groups can be called diverse in terms of the lexical and grammatical features of the reactions received. It should be noted that in the modelled

Russian and Latvian associative fields, reaction-words and reaction-word combinations prevail. By activating individual and collective life experience, speakers of the Russian and the Latvian languages identify and verbalize various evaluative components of the words *good* and *bad*, which are expressed in both languages mainly by nouns—75% and adjectives—22%. This distribution of reactions was most likely influenced by the form and wording of the task, the execution of which took place in writing (the respondents had to write down the first words, which came to their mind, as a reaction to the proposed stimuli); and, also, the main reason for this was the lexico-grammatical feature of the stimulus words (adjective in the nominative, masculine, singular form).

Based on the analysis of the associative fields (AFs), it can be concluded:

1. The parametric line of differences is reflected in the respondents' linguistic consciousness as a chain of antonyms. The scale of evaluative features clearly appears in the united synonyms of the evaluation:

good→favourable—the best—excellent
↔disgusting—the worst—evil←*bad*

2. The intensity of the reaction and its expressiveness in the AF indicate the great relevance of the stimulus words in the linguistic consciousness of the studied social group. For example:

- *хороший* = *good* (in Russian)—спаситель (saviour), ангел (angel), белый (white), пушистый (fluffy), награда (reward), лапочка (cutie pie), чистый (clean), чудный (wonderful), классный (awesome);
- *плохой* = *bad* (in Russian)—враг (enemy), лживый (deceitful), болото (swamp), гнусный (hideous), гадость (filth), ничтожный (insignificant), мерзкий (nasty), негодяй (scoundrel), хам (boor), жуть (eerie-ness);
- *labs* = *good* (in Latvian)—balts (white), baznīca (church), Dievs (God), eņģelis (angel), labdarība (charity), maigs (gentle), gaišums (lightness);
- *slikts* = *bad* (in Latvian)—cietums (prison), elle (hell), nodevējs (traitor), noziegums (crime), tumšs (dark), zagts (stolen), pretīgs (disgusting).

In the Russian associative field, the stimulus words *хороший* = *good* (kind), *плохой* = *bad* (low) have only one

association, which coincides with the synonyms given in the dictionary. In the Latvian associative field, the stimulus words *labs/slikts* = *good-bad* have 6 associations that coincide with the synonyms in the dictionary.

3. The individual experience of the world cognition is comparable to the determination of social orientations and values in the period of language awareness development. First, young people evaluate the aspects of reality that are directly related to it. In this case, the interest is in identical associations in the associative field of the stimulus words *good, bad*. Conditionally, some realities can be distinguished in the variation of the evaluation:

- family: мама (mother), семья (family), дом (house);
- quality: доброжелательный (benevolent), добрый (kind), радостный (joyful), злой (evil); foršs (cool), ļauns (evil), melns (black), nelabais (evil), patiess (true);
- value: душа (soul), жизнь (life), поступок (deed), работа (work), здоровье (health); darbs (work), skola (school), laiks (time);
- human being: я (I), человек (human being), друг (friend), учитель (teacher), герой (hero), мальчик (boy); cilvēks (human being), zēns (boy), draugs (friend), es (I).

Secondly, the links with cultural and social trends are becoming more important. These results of the associative experiment indicate the degree of acquisition, but not the high actualization of the social and societal norms of the young people.

In the associative field under analysis, a range of antonyms of traditional social orientation can be identified:

(in Russian AF) белый-черный (white-black), мой-чужой (mine-someone else's), друг-враг (friend-enemy), герой-негодяй (hero-villain), добро-зло (good-evil), приятный- отвратительный (pleasant-disgusting), веселье-скука (fun -boredom), честный-лживый (honest -deceitful), щедрый-жадный (generous-greedy), жизнь-смерть (life-death), etc;

(in Latvian AF) prieks-bēdas (joy-sorrow), gaišums-tumsa (light-darkness), laime-nelāime (happiness-misfortune), ļauns-labs (evil-good), pozitīvs-negatīvs (positive-negative), etc.

4. The evaluative stimuli *good, bad* activate the range of concepts and phenomena in the consciousness of the young people that fit into everyday existence.

Хороший = good (in Russian)—добрый 66 (good), плохой 44 (bad), друг 41 (friend), человек 34 (human being), день 12 (day), положительный 12 (positive), добро 10 (good), милый 9 (nice), я 8 (I), дом 7 (house).

Labs = good (in Latvian)—slikts 54 (bad), cilvēks 33 (human being), patīkams 26 (pleasant), balts 21 (white), draugs 21 (friend), darbs 15 (work), gaišs 14 (bright), laiks 14 (time), pozitīvs 13 (positive), garastāvoklis 12 (mood), ļauns 11 (evil), es 10 (I).

Плохой = bad (in Russian)—злой 64 (evil), человек 29 (human being), хороший 27 (good), враг 16 (enemy), день 12 (day), зло 10 (evil), чёрный 7 (black), жестокий 5 (cruel), лживый 5 (deceitful), отдых 5 (rest).

Slikts = bad (in Latvian)—labs 46 (good), ļauns 27 (evil), cilvēks 26 (human being), laiks 19 (time), melns 19 (black), tumšs 19 (dark), nepatīkams 17 (unpleasant), garastāvoklis 10 (mood).

The analysis of the word reactions in the associative field reveals the characteristics of the evaluation, which cover their sphere of moral-emotional activity, the sphere of the activity of the external reality, as well as the sphere of interaction with the society.

The associative experiment allowed for distinguishing several spheres that were important for the participants as for linguistic personalities: subjective, temporal, emotional and spatial.

The subjective sphere is represented by many associations among the Russian and the Latvian respondents. Quite a few word-reactions coincide in both associative fields: *good*-angel, dad, cat, grandfather, dog; *bad*-bandit, enemy, devil, traitor, criminal, thief, companion.

The temporal sphere is made up of a small number of associations. Some can be mentioned: *good*—(in Russian) заработок (earnings), лето (summer), награда (reward), отдых (rest), поступок (deed), сон (sleep), солнце (sun), туча (cloud), улыбка (smile); (in Latvian) diena (day), darbs (work), nākotne (future), laiks (time), smaids (smile), saule (sun);

bad—(in Russian) вечер (evening), вечеринка (party), дневник (diary), погода (weather); (in Latvian) uguns (fire), laiks (time), lietus (rain), garastāvoklis (mood), nakts (night).

The smallest number is displayed in the spatial sphere. It is represented by only a few associations: in Russian, *good*-дом (house), дорога (road), небо (sky); *bad*-лес (for-

est), мир (world), океан (ocean); in Latvian, *good*-jūra (sea), vilnis (wave); *bad*-ceļš (road).

The emotional sphere is very diverse. This sphere includes a large number of word-reactions with expressive colour:

good—(in Russian) радость (joy), счастливый (happy), (in Latvian) lepns (proud), ļauns (evil), maigs (gentle), paklausīgs (obedient);

bad—(in Russian) злой (evil), злость (anger), как тебе не стыдно (shame on you), ненависть (hatred), обида (offence), отвратительный (disgusting), ужас (horror), (in Latvian) augsts (high), drūms (gloomy), dusmas (anger), grēks (sin), pretīgs (disgusting), etc.

5. A positive evaluation of the stimulus words *good*, *bad* is significantly less diverse and less actualized in comparison to the negative one.

Evaluation marked by “plus”—(in Russian) адекватный, благородный, достойный, замечательный, хороший = adequate, noble, worthy, wonderful, good; (in Latvian) atbilstošs, derīgs, foršs, jauks, kvalitatīvs, normāls, pareizs, pozitīvs, teicams = appropriate, valid, cool, nice, high-quality, normal, correct, positive, excellent.

Evaluation marked by “minus”—гадкий (disgusting), не бывает (non-existent), никакой (unremarkable), безобразный (ugly), вредный (harmful), гадость (filth), гнусный (hideous), жестокий (cruel), мерзкий (nasty), лживый (deceitful), низкий (low), ничтожный (insignificant), не нравится (do not like), in Russian AF; kad nav cerības (when there is no hope), bēdīgs (sad), vāji (weak), ļauns (evil), nederīgs (useless), nelabs (wicked), riebiņš (disgusting), slikts (bad), negatīvs (negative), negodīgs (dishonest), in Latvian AF.

6. The stimulus words *good*, *bad* demonstrate connections:

- With quantitative evaluation: *bad* is evaluated as small, insufficient, whereas *good*—as big, huge, worthy, etc.;
- With qualitative evaluation: *good*—careful, nice, noble, kind, gentle, clean, valuable; *bad*— someone else’s, rude, cruel, low, lying, slick, etc.;
- With colour evaluation: *good*—white, yellow, brown, pink, bright; *bad*—grey, dark blue, dark, black.

7. In the Modern Russian Dictionary, its four volumes contain ten meanings of the lexeme *good* and four meanings

of the lexeme *bad*. The Dictionary of the Latvian Literary Language indicates ten meanings of the lexeme *good* and eight meanings of the lexeme *bad*. According to the data of the analysis of the word-reactions, the lines of concretization of the stimulus words partially coincide with the basic meaning of the lexemes: (not) meeting the requirements of a) the functioning of the system; b) professional suitability; c) morality; d) quantitatively; e) qualitatively; and f) (un) pleasant.

During the associative experiment, it was revealed that the word combination of the noun *road* and an adjective was one of the most frequent reactions. This indicates that *road* from the point of view of evaluation is of the respondents' particular interest; it represents a spatial sphere, which is significant for the participants of the experiment, and these lexemes are marked by utilitarian evaluation.

When evaluating one or another reality, people harmonize it with their idealized world model (image), which represents human goals and ideals. Thus, axiological predicates only establish the existence (or absence) of an ideal reality. N. Arutyunova writes: "evaluation is purposefully oriented both in a broad and in a narrow sense. This can be applied to anything that is directed against the sublime models of the small and the big worlds, i.e., what one recognises as a benefit," and further she concludes: "linguistics cannot identify these higher benefits. It can only confirm that the use of general evaluation predicates (good and well, bad or badly) is justified by the attitude towards the idealized world model"^[3].

The reaction *road* is the projection of stereotypical views on the object to which certain qualities and properties have been attributed. The application of an axiological approach to the analysis of language units makes it possible to "enter" a closed mental sphere of direct observation, the value system of nations or ethnic groups; it allows the dominant values to manifest themselves in consciousness.

Axiological features of *road* can be emphasized, using the peculiarities of the evaluation of *good/bad* in the linguistic consciousness of the Russian and the Latvian youth. In the Russian associative field of *good*—big 7, straight 8, wide 18, main 4, smooth 3 *road*; *bad*—twisting 18, crooked 5, broken 2, narrow 3, slippery 1 *road*. The Latvians define *good* as wide 11 and straight 9, big 1 and free 1 *road*; *bad*—full of twists and turns 3, bumpy 4, winding 17 and wrinkled

4, narrow 3 *road*. The Russian and Latvian young people were not so categorical and gave an ambivalent evaluation to *road*—good, bad. The Latvian young people were not so categorical and gave an ambivalent evaluation to *road*—good, bad. It should be noted that negative and positive evaluations from the Russian and the Latvian informants are of the same type^[20].

The reaction *road* shows the evaluation of the attitude, first of all, it is a qualitative evaluation. Their parametric data are relevant for the evaluation of *road*: **length** (infinite, long, endless), **width** (narrow, large, wide), **surface smoothness** (rough, bumpy, smooth). Second, there is a colour evaluation. There are a few such evaluations; they are mostly individual (yellow, black, grey, white, green). The following evaluation of colour is of interest—yellow road. It can be assumed that such an evaluation-association is related to the autumn landscape, although in the minds of the modern Russian speakers it can be associated with the title of Olga Kormuhina's or Vladimir Kuzmin's song "Yellow Road" or with the yellow road in Sidama (the Netherlands), which was constructed in 2003 and symbolizes the beginning of the road to fame and fortune. Taking into account the previous results of the free-associative experiment of the stimulus words *good* and *bad*, it can be concluded that, in the linguistic consciousness of the Russian respondents, the association with the yellow road stands for a good road, whereas the black road is a bad one.

In the linguistic consciousness of the Latvian speaker, the word-reaction *white* is associated with a good road, as "the semantics of the word *white* in the Latvian way of life have been studied and explained more than once, and there is an established opinion that to Latvians "white" is synonymous to and a symbol of the good, the wise, especially in poetic texts; the word is much less often associated with frost, stagnation, death and destruction, as it is the case, for example, in Chinese and other Eastern cultures "^[21].

In his book "Tu dzīvoji dižu darbu" ("You lived great work"), I. Ziedonis writes that the word "white" includes aesthetic and ethical values at the same time"^[22]. For a Latvian, white is associated with everything beautiful, pure, morally valuable and even sacred. It is a colour of spiritual clarity. In this regard, the associative reaction of *white road* is justified and directly related to the metaphor: good—white road—white life.

4. Discussion

At the basis of comparing linguistic worldviews lies the idea that linguistic consciousness is correlated with both broad and localized cultural contexts. In addition, languages that exist in spatial contact interact with and influence one another. Thus, it is possible to consider and discuss changes that manifest themselves in different time periods under the influence of shifting cultural paradigms and geopolitical circumstances. In the conducted study, the initial hypothesis was that within the range of evaluative associations, responses would emerge that are connected to ethnic group characteristics—in the present case, such responses as “Russians are bad, Latvians are good”, and vice versa. However, the specific design of the associative experiment assumed a context-free situation, i.e. participants were not given any background related to the current linguistic, culturological or geopolitical situation, and the experiment was conducted during periods not tied to national or political events or discussions (such as, e.g., elections, active debates about the status of Russians or Russian speakers in Latvia). In this case, the experiment showed that ethnic characteristics are not dominant, and the evaluative opposition “good-bad” is perceived within a broader cultural context. The next step in the research could involve an experiment where the emphasis on ethnic characteristics is deliberately modelled and introduced as a background element. The results obtained could then be compared, taking correlation into account. A separate comparative direction of the study could focus on examining the linguistic worldview of bilinguals (with participant selection based on their equal fluency in both Russian and Latvian). Bilingualism is a widespread phenomenon in the Latgale region. Current empirical findings contradict certain cognitive scientists’ claims that bilingualism influences memory performance (see, for example, the article by Ellen Bialystok^[23]).

5. Conclusions

In a similar study focusing on idioms in the English language, Sevinj Shukurlu arrives at the following conclusion: “The analysis of the concepts of “good” and “bad” in any society from a linguistic and cultural point of view forms an idea about the national realities of certain people and the ethnic landscape of the world of a person who speaks

a specific language and its reflection in the language consciousness”^[24].

The associative experiment carried out and the analysis of the results obtained allow us to conclude that the antonymic pair good-bad is recognized by the young Russian and Latvian speakers as a value category. This evaluation appears in the linguistic consciousness of the Latgale youth as a constantly developing and changing category, which is confirmed by the lexemes that verbalize it, as well as by the processes of concretization and abstraction of evaluative meanings. Evaluation is a multidimensional mental formation that has a complex structure. The associative experiment made it possible to reveal the specifics of the linguistic representation of the respondents’ different types of knowledge and opinions about the evaluation, for example, knowledge of norms and stereotypes, axiological characteristics of objects, ideas about the evaluation scale, etc. In their reactions, the respondents used synonymous and antonymic means of the Russian and the Latvian languages, which helped to express the degrees of positive and negative indications, to present different types of emotional attitude of the subject of the evaluation to the object being evaluated (e.g., the reaction road + adjective). The evaluative category good/bad is universal in its representation in various languages and cultures^[25] attributes “evaluation” to concepts-universalias, semantic primitives); at the same time, it is ethnospecific in its content.

The analysis of associative fields has shown that in the linguistic consciousness of Latgalian youth, under conditions of sociocultural change, there is a tendency to shift from particular, situational evaluations to more generalized representations in distinguishing between the categories of good and bad. Furthermore, the clarity of the opposition between good and bad has been replaced by gradations of degree, which serves as evidence of how young people conceptualize good and bad in real life. This can be explained by several factors. First, the sociocultural context plays a crucial role in this case. The youth of Latgale, living in a multilingual and multicultural environment, are influenced not only by local traditions and family norms, but also by global discourses (media, the internet, education). This fosters a tendency toward universal, more “supra-personal” reactions. Confirmation of this in the present associative experiment is the relatively small number of individual (personal) responses to

the stimulus words *good* and *bad* (27 out of 868 responses from Russian-speaking respondents, and 31 out of 878 from Latvian respondents). At the same time, the diversity of responses to the evaluative category “good/bad” attests to its antiquity and general significance in both the Russian and Latvian languages and cultures. Second, the interference of cultural codes is also a significant factor. In Latgale, Latvian, Latgalian, and Russian cultural-linguistic codes intersect. This strengthens the youth’s tendency to search for common, “supra-ethnic” grounds in evaluating the key evaluative concepts of good and bad. This is demonstrated by the large number of identical responses from Russian and Latvian respondents obtained during the experiment. Thus, the shift from particular evaluations (e.g., “good-me”) to generalized ones (“good-society”) reflects the formation among Latgalian youth of a more holistic linguistic worldview, one that reflects both the influence of cultural tradition and the processes of socialization and integration into a broader cultural context.

In the process of cognizing the world, an evaluation on a scale of good-bad acts as a kind of basic means of this very cognition; it is a way of ordering thinking and allows one to express his/her opinion about what is good and what is bad. Any evaluation is initially dual. Consequently, it is anthropocentric, and its study can be successful only as a result of interdisciplinary research.

Author Contributions

Conceptualization, E.I. and E.V.; methodology, E.I. and E.V.; software, E.V.; validation, E.I.; formal analysis, E.I.; investigation, E.I. and E.V.; resources, E.I.; writing—original draft preparation, E.I. and E.V.; writing—review and editing, E.I. and E.V.; project administration, E.V.; All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

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Informed Consent Statement

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The collected data is not made publicly available.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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