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## Man – Language – Reality

### vs Language Education

*Each language is some form of reaching the world; each language community is created by a shared image of the world contained in the native language<sup>1</sup>.*

### Introduction

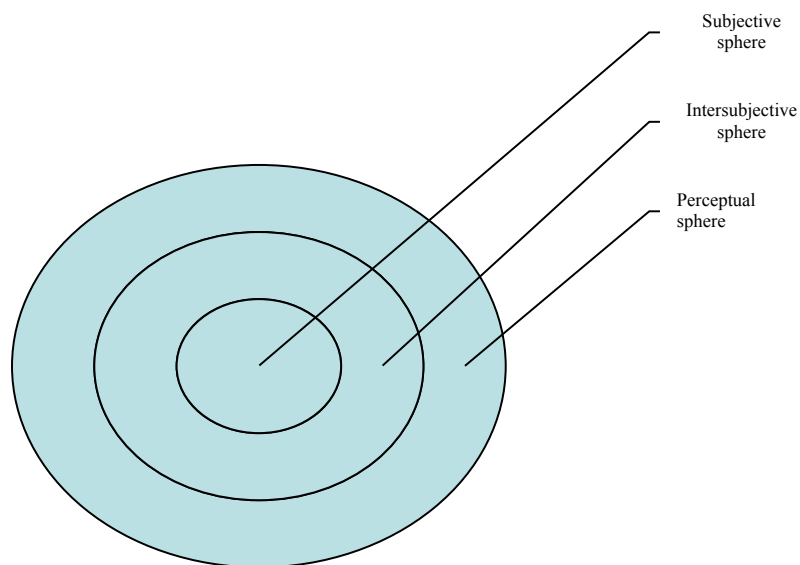
The relationship **man-language-reality** is as complex and equivocal as each of its components. Both the term “man” as well as “language” and “reality” are defined and described in multiple ways, depending on the cognitive perspective. Embedding research issues, referring to the entire relationship, in a given discipline of science causes some elements to be subjected to a deep analysis, whilst others – to a marginal one. Pedagogy accentuates aspects other than those accentuated by sociology, psychology or anthropology. The same subject matter of research, as the relationship man-language-reality here, can be enlightened from different perspectives. This is why the broad and equivocal area of studies focused on this relationship requires clarification of the range of “insight”, i.e. the description of the point of view and its specification. I narrow down the subject of my consideration to the second part of the title – “language education”. I am interested in **what place education has in the process of learning/understanding of man’s reality through language**. A problem formulated in this way, in its premises, pertains to theories explaining the process of conceptualisation of meanings in the mind of an individual. It is worth referring in this introduction to Jürgen Habermas, who pointed to the interdependence between the perceptual, subjective world and the intersubjective sphere<sup>2</sup>. Regardless of which of these three “worlds” is going to be described – it always refers to the others. In my considerations I understand the “perceptual world” as experienced reality, the “subjective world” as the perspective of the experiencing person (man), whilst the “intersubjective world” – the sphere of meanings worked out by a community (society).

#### Fig. 1. Relationship man-reality

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<sup>1</sup> J. Anusiewicz, A. Dąbrowska, M. Fleischer, *Językowy obraz i kultura. Projekt koncepcji badawczej*, [w:] *Język a kultura*, tom 13, *Językowy obraz świata i kultura*, Ed. A. Dąbrowska and J. Anusiewicz, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego, Wrocław 2000, 25.

<sup>2</sup> J. Habermas, *Communication and the Evolution of Society*, Bacon Press, Boston 1979, 67.



**Man constitutes the subjective sphere, reality – perceptual sphere. Between them there mediates the intersubjective sphere.** A crucial issue arises: in what way is the intersubjective sphere created, as its description may prove helpful in explanation of the process of man’s understanding of reality being created. In this context I would like to consider language education.

### **Man – language**

From his first moments of life man is “immersed” in language – this thesis is confirmed by both linguistics as well as developmental psychology. As early as in the mother’s womb, during the last weeks of pregnancy, a foetus receives sounds from the external world, including, among other things, the melody of language. Then particular perceptual habits are formed, which sensitivise one to specific characteristic sounds of one’s mother tongue. There start to be created first “matrices” of world interpretation, which at a later stage of life enable reception of different symbolic signs, including those of a native language and aesthetic preferences, e.g. one’s liking for a particular type of music. When a child comes into the world, s/he is “surrounded” by symbolic messages – colours, shapes and

sounds. Various sensory experiences are transformed in the mind into meanings assigned to them by the social surroundings. People surrounding the child speak whilst words bear meanings together with a gesture, mimic or emotion. In this way linguistic and communicative competencies start to be formed, and subsequently – understanding of reality. The meaning of a word is connected with sensory experience, yet at the beginning mostly with fulfilment of the first-level needs: hunger, warmth, safety, whilst the process of reaching understanding symbolic signs is dependent on the course of interpretation of the intent of a message in interaction with fellow beings. In this complex process the turning point is occurrence of the so-called theory of mind, i.e. realization of other people having a disparate outlook on reality (“s/he knows something different from what I do”). It is a peculiar form of understanding, forming at about the age of four<sup>3</sup> and consisting in the ability to infer on other people’s states of mind. This form of understanding is based on images, that is why it is called “reading in thoughts” or “mentalisation”, while in psychological literature it is most frequently referred to with the shortening ToM (*Theory of Mind*)<sup>4</sup>. In everyday communication practices this ability is developed from the level of intentionality of “the second level”, on which personal convictions and convictions about another person’s convictions become revealed (e.g. Julie is convinced that Kate thinks that...). Psychological studies show that adults may reach intentionality up to the sixth level, whilst lack of this ability or an ability limited to the first level (Julie is convinced that ...) causes social contacts to be disturbed<sup>5</sup>.

The processes of creating and understanding utterances are studied and described mostly in the sphere of developmental psycholinguistics. Initially (in the first half of 20th century) the framework of psycholinguistic studies was delineated by American structuralism and behaviourism dominating in psychology, whilst the perspective of description of the formation of language competencies was changed later following Noam Chomsky’s first publications<sup>6</sup>, who subjected to criticism the view on language as a set of habits acquired in an imitative fashion. This scientist’s concept of generative grammar created room for studies on the issue of an image of language being formed in the mind. This nativist theory describes specific human abilities to create, on the basis of a finite number of rules, an indefinite

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<sup>3</sup> Whilst already a nine-month year old child realises another point of perception of an object by others, which is manifested by a child’s attention being drawn to an object shown with a gesture by another person.

<sup>4</sup> R. Dunbar, *Nowa historia ewolucji człowieka*, translation and introduction by B. Kucharczyk, Wydawca: Copernicus Center Press, Kraków 2014, 65-67.

<sup>5</sup> Tasks on the theory of mind are weakly handled by schizophrenics, people with autism and Asperger syndrome.

<sup>6</sup> N. Chomsky, *Syntactic Structures*, The Hague, Mouton 1957.

number of sentences, and to understand sentences never heard before by a child. Predominantly, the creative character of acquisition of language abilities is emphasised. The awareness of grammar of the language surrounding a child is formed intuitively, it is informal knowledge. It is intuitive “understanding” and creative processing of information that enables a child to articulate words and sentences in everyday communication contacts.

In expanding social contacts (in the family, a group of peers, in various social situations) a child experiences language use, which contributes to awareness of morphology of the language system being built. A child’s language is not an incomplete version of the adults’ language, but it is always a cohesive system of rules, although differing from the system of the adults’ language. In each phase of language development the image of the language system constitutes a cohesive whole in the child’s mind<sup>7</sup>. In thus understood system of language, a child’s mistakes are a symptom of creative processing of language information (a search for regulaties in construction of an utterance), whilst the development of language competencies consists in continuous transformation of relations in a system (image of language) in the process of “approaching” language correctness. Each child reaches this correctness by a different route, because the selection of rules and categories incorporated to a person’s own image of language is governed, on the one hand, by communicative usefulness, and, on the other hand – by construction aspects. Hence, as Stąd, Magdalena Smoczyńska notes, language systems of particular children are different<sup>8</sup>. What enables a child to communicate with others (adults or children) is overlap between certain areas of the system and occurrence of certain general structuralist phenomena characteristic of a given language. In the language of a specific child there may occur “derailments” (errors) in application of specific rules, e.g. in word formation, hence sometimes amusing to adults child neologisms, which are, however, understandable to participants of communication despite being “incorrect”. A child is thus a constructor of his/her own language and s/he independently, in everyday experience of reception and construction of own utterances, deepens his/her morphological awareness of language. “Immersion in language” first activates intuitive and then gradually reflective awareness of the symbolic system, with these processes always being dependent on emotional and social aspects. The language potential gathered enables generation of language rules, whilst knowledge and experience are processed and

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<sup>7</sup> M. Smoczyńska, *Metodologiczne problemy analizy błędów językowych dzieci*, [in:] *Wiedza a język*, tom 2, *Język dziecka*, composite volume ed. by I. Kurcz, G. W. Shugar, B. Bokus, Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, Wydawnictwo Polskiej Akademii Nauk, Wrocław-Warszawa 1987, 95.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibidem*, 98.

incorporated into one's personal interiorized knowledge – **language becomes a cognitive tool in the learning of the perceptual world and functioning in the social world.**

## **Man – Society**

**Language** is a living, open system, as it falls subject to changes related to social needs. To learn language rules means to acquire cultural and social norms, which are reflected in language. Michael Halliday claimed that a child learns meanings thanks to information on an utterance functioning in a social context. Gradually developed language competencies are dependent on communicative functions of language occurring in a child's development<sup>9</sup>. According to this idea, the development of a child's language is organized by strivings to master the basic functions of speech: representative and interpersonal, which, from the very beginning, drive a child's thinking and speech. **Language becomes a “handy” tool in different situations between people.** A child is an active explorer and experimenter, learning and testing language functions in communication with others.

Studies on the development of child language disclose the significance of social interaction in the process of construction of language utterances. Before a child has learnt to independently construct an entire verbal text, the child co-creates a text together with a more competent language user<sup>10</sup>. Studies on co-creation of narration by a child and an adult have been dealt with by, among others, Grace Wales Shugar, Ron and Suzanne Wong Scollon, Patricia Greenfield, Allyssa McCabe, Carole Peterson. In the works by these scientists evidence is collected for the dependence of language competence on social interactions. This strand of research also includes those concerning analyses of narrative discourse in peer interactions. Studies on early verbal and non-verbals-and-verbal interactions among children disprove Jean Piaget's thesis on egocentrism of a child's speech<sup>11</sup>. Social interactions constitute a source of information (on the state of affairs, events, people's intentions, feelings, ways of expressing feelings and conditions) and motivate to acquire new verbal abilities. They thus contribute to the development of language competence or, more broadly, to the cognitive development of a child.

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<sup>9</sup> The meaning potential of a given function of language utterances with regard to a child's developmental needs is described by Halliday's sociolinguistic conception: see: M. A. K. Halliday, *Uczenie się znaczeń*, [in:] *Badania nad rozwojem języka dziecka. Wybór prac*, Ed. G. W. Shugar and M. Smoczyńska, Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, Warszawa 1980.

<sup>10</sup> B. Bokus, *Tworzenie opowiadań przez dzieci. O linii i polu narracji*, Wydawnictwo Energeia, Kielce 1991, 43.

<sup>11</sup> See e.g.: B. Bokus, *Tworzenie opowiadań przez dzieci*, op. cit.

A child, manipulating language material interiorised in social experiences, becomes an active sender and recipient of language messages. The need to communicate within an increasingly larger circle of people is a drive for formation increasingly more complicated language structures. A child's cultural experience and range of knowledge contained in language depend on the sociolinguistic environment in which the child grows up. This issue is dealt with by pragmatic linguistics and cultural linguistics, and also sociology. In the 60s, as a result of studies by British sociologist Basil Bernstein, there appeared categories of sociolinguistic codes delineating a field for reflection combining linguistic with sociological concepts. Complex mechanisms of language communication can be, thanks to such an approach, described and explained. A sociolinguistic code in Bernstein's idea is defined as a certain regulatory rule governing properties of language use. The codes form a peculiar "semiotic grammar", shaped by rules of division of work, power and symbolic control<sup>12</sup>. They delineate and form orientations towards meanings with regard to the properties of context of communication, and also they are a message determining a particular type of behaviour<sup>13</sup>.

Studies of linguists, including aforementioned Basil Bernstein<sup>14</sup>, allow the statement that the character of social relationships in a given group of people determines properties of the language they use. It is in the closest social and linguistic environment, in the family and the group of peers, that communicative norms and language habits are formed. The native language becomes the basic code for receiving all language communiques occurring in a child's experiences. This "first" language is a peculiar matrix for interpretation of the world and construction of the experiencing individual's own identity. This thought refers to sociological conceptions by, among others, Karl Mannheim: Only in a very limited degree does an individual generate by oneself the manner of speaking and thinking we assign to her. The individual speaks the language of a group and thinks in the way that group thinks<sup>15</sup>. The basic tool in the process of negotiating meanings and establishing social schemata of interpretation of the world is language. As Lev Vygotski claims, awareness is mediated in the world through language, with both language and awareness existing as correlates of social practice<sup>16</sup>.

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<sup>12</sup> Bernstein's theory corresponds to the conception of culture reproduction by Pierre Bourdieu.

<sup>13</sup> B. Bernstein, *Odtwarzanie kultury*, selected and prepared by A. Piotrowski, translation and introduction by Z. Bokszański, A. Piotrowski, Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, Warszawa 1990, 9-10.

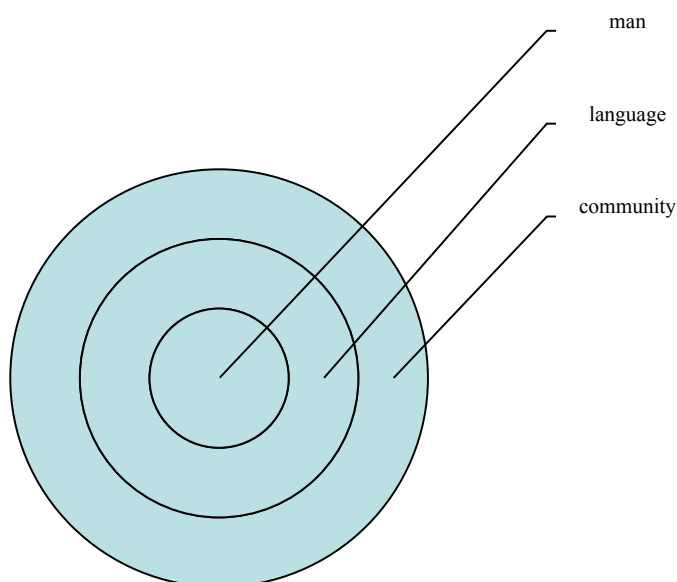
<sup>14</sup> B. Bernstein, *Socjolingwistyczne ujęcie procesu socjalizacji: uwagi dotyczące podatności na oddziaływanie szkoły*, tłumaczyła Z. Babska, [in:] *Badania nad rozwojem języka dziecka. Wybór prac*, op. cit.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. K. Mannheim, *Ideologia i utopia*, translated by J. Miziński, Wydawnictwo "Test", Lublin 1992, 2.

<sup>16</sup> S. Balbus, *Wygotski i jego teoria kultury: psychologia, język, sztuka*, [w:] L. Wygotski, *Psychologia sztuki*, translation M. Zagórska, scientific preparation of text, introduction and commentaries by S. Balbus, Wydawnictwo Literackie, Kraków 1980, 18.

Relationships between an individual and society are also subject matter of Pierre Bourdieu's considerations<sup>17</sup>, who draws attention to the social conditions of transmission of knowledge. He introduces the term "habitus" to refer to the element mediating between individual and collective practices. A habitus is a system of steady "dispositions", a complex of possible references in the world interpretation. **It mediates between objective social structures and individual subjective behaviours of individuals.** A habitus is not subject to discourse, because it functions below the level of consciousness. As the primary form of classification and the orientating practice, a habitus ensures the sense of one's place in social reality.

**Fig 2. Man – Society**



**In his cognitive development man is determined by language and at the same time uses language in a creative way to function in the social world. Between a community and an individual there occur complex interactions mediated by language.**

This thought is the basis of the concept of the Language Image of the World, which, despite owing its inception to linguistic studies, contemporarily has its place also in social

<sup>17</sup> P. Bourdieu, J.- C. Passeron, *Reprodukcja. Elementy teorii systemu nauczania*, translation E. Neyman, Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, Warszawa 2006, 466.

sciences<sup>18</sup>. It is accepted that the premises of the concept of the Language Image of the World and its theses were drawn up by Wilhelm von Humboldt, although this term appeared already as early as during the Renaissance. The basis of the concept is the assumption that every natural language contains in its structure a specific image of the world of the community using it. According to Humboldt, language is not only a means of communication, but also an expression of its users' spirit and outlook on the world. Eduard Sapir presents the view that by means of language culturally conditioned symbols are created, the meanings of which enable construction of the mental image of reality by a particular community. This premise leads the scientist to the hypothesis of language determinism, whereby mental structures and mental possibilities are determined by the system of a given language<sup>19</sup>.

In more recent approaches to the issue of connection between language and thought the interdependence of these components in the development and functioning of man is emphasised. Particularly neurolinguistic studies reveal that strictly language information and that responsible for the remaining part of cognition constitute mechanisms which incessantly permeate each other and which can act as both disparate as well as intergrated processors<sup>20</sup>. The latest studies of LIW are related to cognitive linguistics, with its studies concentrated on the interdependence between language and cognitive processes of an individual. Categories worked out via the cognitive approach proved useful for studies of the expression forms of children and the youth. In the cognitive perspective the aim of studies is to reveal cognitive content recorded in a natural language and the way this content is structured in utterances of a child<sup>21</sup>. From it a specified cognitive model is reconstructed, within the framework of which an object-term is delineated. Descriptions of text utterances remain bound with the point of view taken by the subject, the type of knowledge about the world, cognitive "sensitivity", the system of models and values, and so – with factors belonging to the cognitive and cultural base. Furthermore, mutual connections of language with the experiencing individual's social and cultural world are emphasised. In this respect, the psychological, sociological or pedagogical perspective makes it possible to apply the LIW category to studies uncovering various aspects of the system, not only the linguistic but more broadly – cultural one.

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<sup>18</sup> R. Jedliński, *Językowy obraz świata w wypowiedziach uczniów kończących szkołę podstawową*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe Akademii Pedagogicznej w Krakowie, Kraków 2000.

<sup>19</sup> M. Fleischer, *Obraz świata. Ujęcie z punktu widzenia teorii systemów i konstruktywizmu*, [in:] *Język a kultura*, tom 13. *Językowy obraz świata i kultura*, ed. A. Dąbrowska and J. Anusiewicz, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego, Wrocław 2000, 48.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. J. Mazurkiewicz-Sokołowska, *Lingwistyka mentalna w zarysie. O zdolności językowej w ujęciu integrującym*, Universitas, Kraków 2010, 214.

<sup>21</sup> *Językowy obraz świata dzieci i młodzieży*, composite work edited by J. Ożdżyński, Wydawnictwo Naukowe Wyższej Szkoły Pedagogicznej, Kraków 1995.



The language image of the world is understood as a specific “intermediary entity” between a language community and the external world. This thesis was developed by Leo Weisgerber in the concept of “language mediating world”, in which classification, categorisation and establishment of the specific way of delineating the external reality take place. It is created by socially and linguistically conditioned content. This thought is currently being continued by Michael Fleischer in the theory of the system of culture understood as the “second reality”.

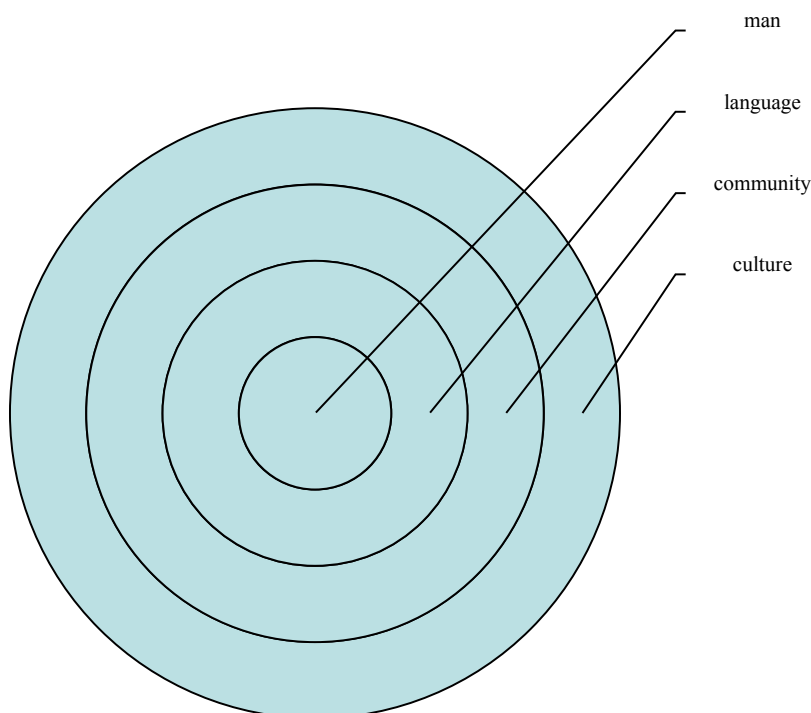
### **Man – culture**

Physical reality is subjected by society to an interpretation, the symptoms of which are multifarious symbolic facts. From the same sign material in different cultures various constructs are created constituting manifestations of images of the world of a given community. Culture is created by various semiotic phenomena: utterances, texts, images – components expressible in signs and sign processes. Their function is to direct and organize our communicative strategies within a given community. Communication is understood here in the constructivist way, i.e. it concerns mutual matching of cultural constructs<sup>22</sup>. The second reality is created as a result of complex mechanisms, in which the crucial role is played by peculiar “filters” shaped in discourses of a given cultural formation, the aim of which is to allow particular but not other manifestations of the image of the world.

### **Fig 3. Man – culture**

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<sup>22</sup> M. Fleischer, *Obraz świata. Ujęcie z punktu widzenia teorii systemów i konstruktywizmu*, [in:] *Język a kultura*, tom 13, *Językowy obraz świata i kultura*, op. cit., 48.



A **community** creates a system of symbolic relationships determined by culture, and at the same time it creates culture itself. **Culture** is a system of interpretations of **reality**, it constitutes a symbolic record of real worldly objects.

The system of “second reality” functions separately from the real reality (nature) and has a collective, interpersonal character, that is non-controllable by an individual. Within a given community the very basic *universum* is interpreted in different ways, depending on specific group interests. It is related to the issue of distribution of knowledge and imposing its interpretation (together with behaviour schemata) on weaker groups (e.g. children). It needs to be observed that socially distributed schemata constitute only a framework allowing its relatively flexible treatment. Relatively – because, as the history of culture teaches us, symbolic systems are not “innocent”<sup>23</sup>.

In the description of culture as a system of symbolic relationships we need to refer to the concept by Ernst Cassirer, who answers the question as to what rules govern the formation of content of individual awareness, so that it could become objective. Sense is created intersubjectively by sign activity within a communicating commonwealth. The problem of interdependence between “subjective” and “objective” (social) in the assigning of meanings to

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<sup>23</sup> Cf. A. Hauser, *Spoleczna historia sztuki i literatury*, translation by J. Ruszczykówna, afterword by J. Starzyński, Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, Warszawa 1974.

reality appears particularly important when we want to describe the relationships man-language-reality.

It is in socially “negotiated” interactions that a particular ontological shape of reality is established, hence in Cassirer’s philosophy the word “objective” means “intersubjective”, “communicatable”, “socially agreed”<sup>24</sup>. Cassirer’s concept implies **correlation between supra-individual awareness with individual awareness**, as long as the last one participates in intersubjective cultural communication. The very term ‘communication’ needs to be properly understood. It is to be seen not only as that real, current, sign communication, but also potential, i.e. peculiar communicativeness of the perceptual sphere, resulting from the said social agreement.<sup>25</sup>

Terms related to society, identity and reality are shaped subjectively in the process of internalisation, with this formation proceeding together with the interiorisation of language. According to Berger and Luckmann, the social process of the “circulation” of reality formation consists in association with significant others, with those social actors whose definitions of situations are established as valid objective reality<sup>26</sup>. What is real “outside” refers to what is real “inside”. Objective reality can be easily “translated” into subjective reality and vice versa. The essential means of this incessant “two-way translation” is, of course, language. Existence in society itself means continuous modification of subjective reality within certain areas of the universum. These changes can be transient or cover a longer period of the individual’s life. Sometimes a complete transformation occurs, “an exchange of worlds”, which Berger and Luckmann call an “alternation”. This is related to a change of life outlook, the existential priority of the perception of the world, with a change of language accompanying this process (JOS).

In the formation of language competencies, apart from the cognitive activity of an individual, are language cultural messages. Here attention needs to be drawn to the cognitive specificity of a small child, who perceives the world holistically. Due to such a type of perception it can be assumed that the early stage of a child’s contacts with cultural message has a nondiversified character, combining in itself various aspects of symbolic experiences. Holistic perception consists in a recipient not perceiving particular forms of message as something disparate from the generality of the reality being familiarized with. With regard to

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<sup>24</sup> J. Sójka, *O koncepcji form symbolicznych Ernsta Cassirera*. Seria: *Metodologia Humanistyki*, redaktorzy serii: J. Kmita, J. Topolski, Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, Warszawa 1988, 46.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. *Ibidem*, 47.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. P. L. Berger, T. Luckmann, *Spoleczne tworzenie rzeczywistości*, translation, introduction by J. Niżnik, Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, Warszawa 1983, 208.

a child at an early age of development, messages in which language is an important component are of a **multi-code character** (i.e. they employ different codes: language, images, sounds, gestures). We can speak about an inter-semiotic character of not only para-literary messages, such as audio-visual or information technology means, but also – of texts of child literature<sup>27</sup>. Cultural conditions have influence on what meaning an individual assigns to reality, and this is manifested in language. It needs to be emphasised here that a child's language activity has a creative character. Under influence of conversations, stories, reading, etc. the range of a child's vocabulary expands. It covers – apart from concrete names – abstract names, and also words specifying and showing spatial relationships and inferential relationships. A six-year old child is able to understand a cause-and-effect sequence, and so s/he understands a plot. S/he understands and can speak about events remote in time but experienced personally or close to personal experience. Texts of culture gradually become incorporated into the repertoire of cognitive tools. They serve not only communicative functions, but they also serve interpretation of experience. Thanks to narrative schemata acquired in childhood, a man becomes capable of reconstruction of the story of his life, reflection on the past and the future, and of comprehending himself and the world. These “prototypical” schemata<sup>28</sup> are in the course of development enhanced and enriched.

**Transmission of cultural symbols takes place in social interactions. It is a process in which all the elements of the relationship man-language-community-culture are dependent on one another and fall subject to mutual transformations.**

## **Man – reality**

The learning of reality by man is mediated by language, generated by a community embedded in a particular culture. The scope of the world learnt by agency of cultural signs, including language, is disproportionately larger than that learnt solely by personal experience.

Sociological concepts concerning the issue of understanding of the “reality of the world” need to be referred to here. It is worth starting with William James's thought, whose views on this matter are regarded by Aleksander Manterys as radical<sup>29</sup>. According to this concept, everything is “real” that excites and stimulates our interest, considered important by

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<sup>27</sup> J. Cieślowski, *Słowo-obraz-gest*, [in:] *Sztuka dla najmłodszych. Teoria-Recepcja-Oddziaływanie*, pod redakcją M. Tyszkowej, Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, Warszawa-Poznań 1977, 84.

<sup>28</sup> D. P. Mc Adams, *The development of a narrative identity*, [w:] *Studies in social identity*, ed. T. Sarbin, K. Scheibe, Preager Press, New York 1983, 160.

<sup>29</sup> A. Manterys, *Wielość rzeczywistości w teoriach socjologicznych*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, Warszawa 1997, 16.

an individual. Reality is perceived subjectively as components distinguished out of the *universum* available to human cognition. According to James, there exist many “orders of reality”, the source of which are learning subjects deciding on the choice of objects out of the “total universum”. The subjectivity of perception of the world causes specific “micro-worlds” to be created, which constitute disparate “orders of reality”. William James’s thought on the multiplicity of realities was taken up by Alfred Schütz in order to consider sociological implications of the relationships in which various “regions of reality”<sup>30</sup> remain with one another. The change made by Schütz of the term “micro-world” into “a limited sphere of sense (meaning)” refers to Edmund Husserl’s findings, who claimed that the areas of reality are the effect of establishing the sense of our experiences as human individuals. Crucial for the creation of reality is the way in which a man imbues the experienced surroundings with sense, that is what meanings he assigns to particular objects of reality.

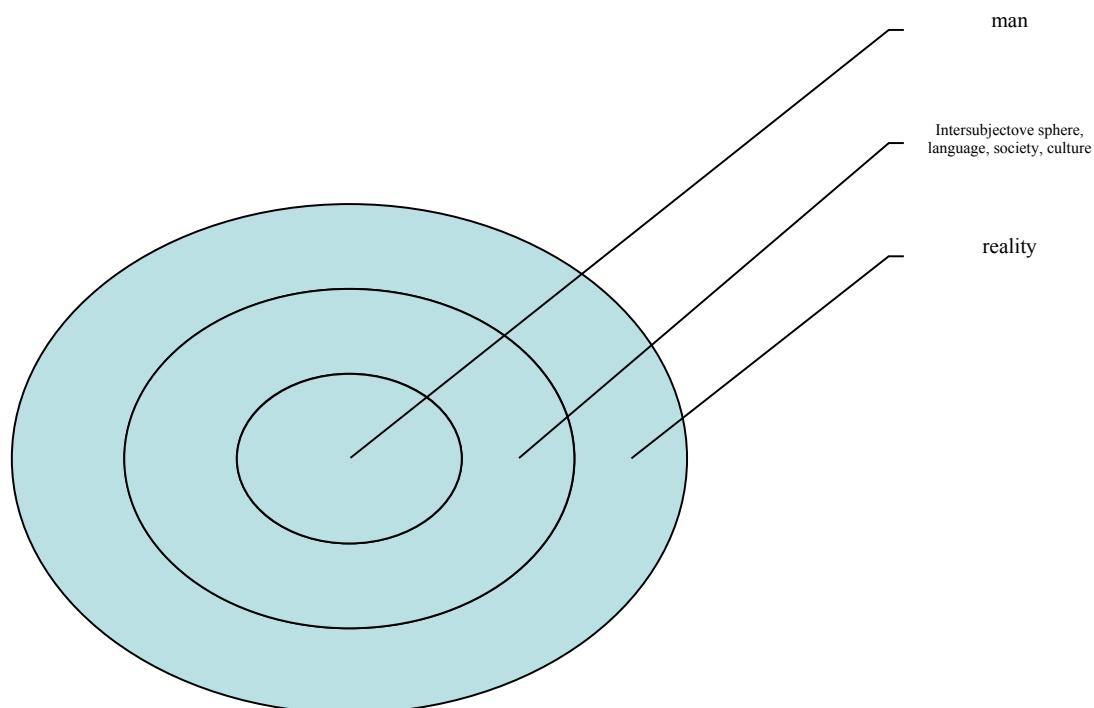
The view on language as presented by Ernst Cassirer accentuates the fundamental role of creation of the world image, which most fully conditions a man’s everyday contact with what can be called “reality of things and events”, and also with what a commonwealth endows him with. Particular language terms denote not only their direct content, but they symbolise also “language view on the world”, without which this practice could not operate.

Subjectively-objective implications of the processes of social creation of reality are shown by sociological theories based on the concept of multiplicity of realities. The awareness of an individual is determined by a position taken with regard to available objects, and this position is dependent on the social and cultural world being implicated in. Hence in sociological conceptions, also those concerning the issue of construction of the awareness of reality, there appears a category of a “social actor” disclosing the interactive character of the situation individual – surroundings. The activity of the learning subject, embedded in the social and cultural surroundings, encompasses different contexts. One of them is the context of “the map” of time and space containing a spectrum of past and future references. It causes particular individuals to assign different meanings to the same objects. These processes are situated in specific channels of interpersonal communication.

#### **Fig. Man – reality**

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<sup>30</sup> A. Schütz, *Don Kichot i problem rzeczywistości*, translation by D. Lachowska, „Literatura na Świecie” nr 2, 1985, 246–248.



**Man learns the reality through the intersubjective sphere created by mutual relationships between language, society and culture.**

As Manterys notes, from the subjective point of view reality appears as a certain symbolic system, disclosed by an individual by mediation of different frames of reference, ways of interpreting multifarious domains of reality, with there being many different levels and layers of experiencing reality<sup>31</sup>. The subjective way of interpreting experience is related to a socially distributed position with regard to a particular fragment of reality. There occurs incessant interpretation and reinterpretation; hence, **reality is constructed and not discovered**. Interpretation and communication of experience proceed within a specified framework conditioned socially. This framework constitutes a symbolic system, which provides an individual with model solutions. The symbolic system ensures continuity of the complex of perception of the world, presentation of oneself both in categories of a subject as well as an object; it is like a stage on which communication is possible<sup>32</sup>. Man experiences reality not realising cultural conditioning of his impressions.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. A. Manterys, *Wielość rzeczywistości w teoriach socjologicznych*, op. cit., 46–47.

<sup>32</sup> Cf. ibidem, 49.

## Man – Education

Language has a functional character with regard to the reality learnt. It constitutes an internal component of the processes of learning, understanding and development. It is a tool of reasoning and means of communication. A teacher, organising a child's cognitive activity, has real influence on how this "tool" will be employed.

With reference to thus delineated problem it is worth referring to the most important conceptions concerning the process of acquisition of language competence by a child which differ in the view on the role of particular factors of the process of language learning<sup>33</sup>. The bone of contention is predominantly the role of such components as a child's inborn abilities, social surroundings, intellectual development, cognitive activity. Particular factors of the process of the development of language competence become a subject of narrow scientific studies and its image is "enlightened" from different sides, sometimes creating opposing conceptions. From the perspective of education the defining of the process of language learning is most important.

Theories referring to behaviourism assume that language learning proceeds in a reproductive way by copying utterances from the surroundings, which does not account for the appearance, in the early stage of development, of the so-called child neologisms, which reveal creative processing of language. This is why theories based on the thesis of "copying" language are rather rejected or at least treated with distrust<sup>34</sup>. It needs to be observed that it is **behaviourist theses that are strongly present in education**. This is manifested in the offer of school tasks, which have a reproductive character ("repeat", "remember", "retell") in the teachers' corrective strategy, in which the student has no search opportunities, whilst a child's language mistake is condemned.

A completely different approach to language learning follows from theories initiated by Noam Chomsky's conception, who sees language competence as a "natural" ability, enabling an individual to generate any number of utterances on the basis of awareness of the morphology of language. Language education of a child at early school age largely concerns

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<sup>33</sup> It needs to be emphasised that differences in research positions concern also indication of the same factors, e.g. behaviourist theories do not take into account an element of creative processing of language data.

<sup>34</sup> Some theses of the behaviourist theory are applied in sociolinguistic studies, e.g. in establishment of models of language diversification depending on a social situation; see: J. R. Taylor, *Gramatyka kognitywna*, tłumaczyła E. Tabakowska, Universitas, Kraków 2007, 6.

acquisition of practical (mostly communicative) abilities and knowledge of only a few terms falling within knowledge of language facilitating formation of those abilities.

Practical language education is made possible by a man's natural ability called language productivity, which as early as at the beginning of the 19th century was drawn attention to by linguist and philosopher W. von Humboldt, whilst Chomsky's theory of generative grammar develops this thought. It is a competence of each person to understand and create an indefinite number of new sentences – on the basis of syntactic structures learnt – in a natural way, that without awareness of the grammar rules applied. Analogically, the ability can be mentioned to understand and create inflectional forms of the words learnt, even if one has a limited vocabulary repertoire but forms utterances on the basis of it. In such a creative process imperfect utterances are created or utterances not always compliant with grammatical correctness, referred to in psychology as “developmental errors”<sup>35</sup>. Accepting this thesis as a premise for construction of educational strategies results in tasks of a creative character, in which a child can search, discover mechanisms of the language system, or create various utterances. **In creative strategies employing fun with language we refer to the mechanisms of natural language learning from the pre-education stage.**

This is why at this educational stage it is not grammatical definitions that are important, but the ability to use knowledge about language in communication behaviours in speech and writing. And here we need to refer to sociological theories accounting for tasks in which there appear authentic situations of social interaction. It is worth arranging drama situations or playing with language or constructing free texts rather than solve tasks which are abstract to the child and detached from the communicative context. A child should see the sense of reaching grammatical or orthographic correctness of one's own utterance, which will be possible if the aim of speaking or writing is known and sensible to the child – when, for example, the text the child is writing and working on is to be copied and published in a school journal. Such tasks, referring to natural language education, are derived from Celestyn Freinet's historical educational conception<sup>36</sup>, whereby creative techniques constitute also today an excellent alternative for language reproduction tasks incomprehensible to the child.

Referring to natural strategies of familiarising oneself with language leads to the constatation that pupils' creation of various utterances which have a communicative aim (such as e.g. letters, conversations), expression of their own imagined pictures (e.g. writing

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<sup>35</sup> Developmental errors occur in the child's language development for a specific period of time regardless of corrections, awards and penalties. I cite following: J. Mazurkiewicz-Sokołowska, *Lingwistyka mentalna w zarysie. O zdolności językowej w ujęciu integrującym*, op. cit., 98.

<sup>36</sup> See.: M. Kuźnik, *Celestyn Freinet we współczesnej pedagogice*, Sowell, Rzeszów 2015.



fairytale or poems) or which constitute fun (such as e.g. rhymes) should be a starting point for next tasks in language education. The child's creation of various texts, which are imperfect and need "explorations" so as to understand what needs to be changed or improved, should serve as the basis of formation of language awareness in younger classes. For language education at this educational stage is about **supporting the development of awareness of language morphology**. Here the learning of definitions of grammatical rules or mechanical exercises following a schema – cannot be effective.

A child at school is in a specific sociolinguistic situation, completely different from those experienced earlier. There change all the components of a speech act which intersect and mutually affect one another: participants (sender and recipient) and language communiqué (a form of message, channel, theme). The recipient of a child's utterances is mainly the teacher, whilst pupils frequently do not listen to their class friend. The speaker raises the voice only as much as it is necessary for it to reach the teacher, with the pupil acting in the role of the recounting person. If we agree that sharing a social (verbal and non-verbal) behaviour constitutes a source of cognition, it is also necessary to reconsider the traditional view on the teacher's role. The teacher can no longer appear as a mediator between knowledge and a pupil, as the understanding of reality is constructed through negotiation of intersubjective meanings. Education is an effect of a child's activity in the environment, also linguistic. Treating language as an instrument of thought and a means of communication requires the teaching model to be changed from the traditional, transmissive, to exploratory which employs knowledge and communicative abilities with which a child approaches a problem. Language education appears in realisation of tasks related to stimulation of the child's intellectual, emotional and volitional development with reference to all elements of educational content in younger classes. Language becomes an integrating axis in early education.

Thus, language education accompanies any educational activity, particularly in the use of "exploratory talk" – speaking in action. Activating exploratory talk is possible in team work, during which, when solving a problem assigned, regardless of the content (science, mathematics, music, etc.), children exchange ideas and discuss strategies of solving them. Apart from language and communicative competencies, pupils also develop extensive cognitive competencies, such as recognition of problems, formulation of hypotheses, data analysis, synthesis and generalisation. An obstacle to such organisation of tasks is a wrongly understood requirement of discipline in the classroom, whereby one must work in silence.

Silence, no doubt, does not support development of social competencies and does not serve development of speech.

Each language carries its own image of the world, and familiarising oneself with the native language becomes at the same time a world interpretation as learnt by a particular community. Language becomes a matrix in the construction of identity of an individual – identity in society, in culture, in the world. In this context language education, particularly learning a foreign language, becomes transformation of the image of the world (or at least reveals another view on the world).

Learning an ethnic language is also – or maybe most importantly – acquisition by an individual of the language image of the world, claims Cassirer. It is not only acquisition of vocabulary and grammar rules, but mostly learning to think in that language. The basic difficulty is not what you must learn, but what you, when speaking a foreign language, forget<sup>37</sup>.

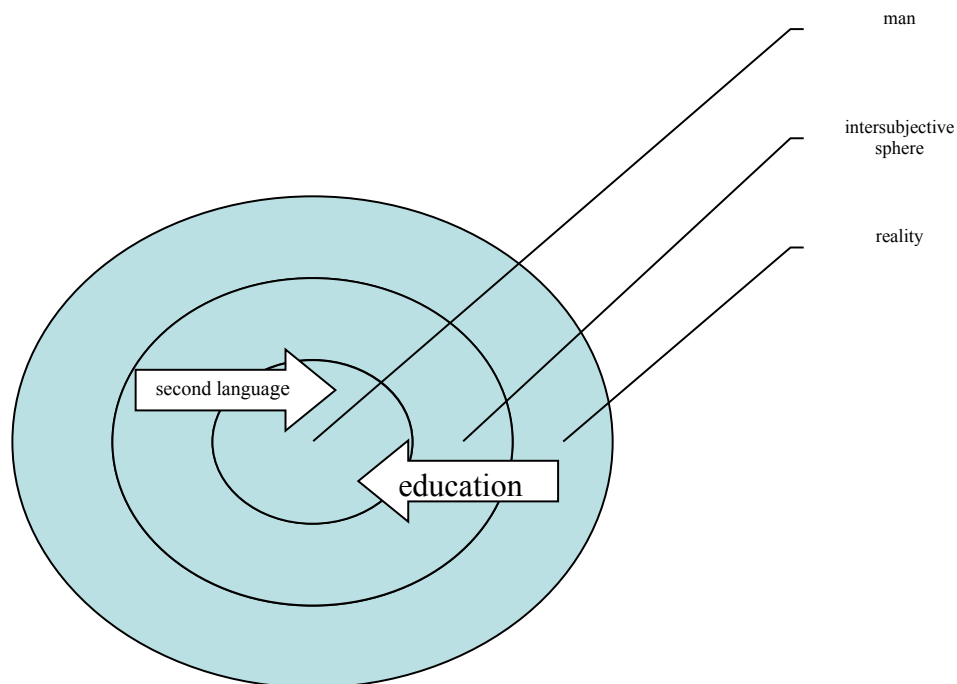
Cassirer associates language view on the world, *Weltansicht der Sprache*, with language thinking. Not syntactic-and-semantic rules, but the vision of reality underlying them is the subject matter of his studies. There arises the problems of “speech universalia”, that is those steady aspects in the behaviour which cause identical solutions to exist in every known language (which is tantamount to the problem: why does an intersubjectiive basis of communication exist?). Charles Osgood writes that codes of different languages are like icebergs that only a small part of which sticks above water: under the surface there hide potentials common to the development of all languages, universal mechanisms of metaphor and synesthesia connected with biological and psychological roots common to all people<sup>38</sup>. Education of a second language should, on the one hand, refer to differences in language images of the world, and, on the other hand – take advantage of these “common” cognitive roots. Only beyond these strategies in education of a second language, as a somewhat “secondary” effect, will the learning of grammar rules and „words” be important.

**Fig. 5. Man – language – education**

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<sup>37</sup> Cf. J. Sójka, *O koncepcji form symbolicznych Ernsta Cassirera*, op. cit., 119.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. U. Eco, *Nieobecna struktura*, translation A. Weinsberg, P. Bravo, Wydawnictwo KR, Warszawa 1996, 360.



### Summary

**Man**, immersed in language, thanks to language assigns meanings to perceived objects. **Language** is a living open system, because it is subject to changes related to social needs. **Society** creates a system of relationships determined by culture, and at the same time it creates culture itself. **Culture** is a system of interpretations of **reality**, constitutes a symbolic record of real objects of the world. **Reality is received as a socially and culturall determined image.**

Learning reality by man is **mediated by language**, generated by society embedded in a particular culture. In everyday being in the world an individual experiences reality always in an intersubjective way – in the continuous negotiation of personal (subjective) meanings and socially shaped meanings. Various symbolic messages conditioned socially and culturally (both their content, access to this but not other, as well as the way of reception) constitute a peculiar set of information which is processed by an individual and incorporated into the image of the world in the mind. Such creative transformation of signs and symbolic meanings is a dynamic process of formation of the understanding of reality.

Proposals of language education in different school systems differ predominantly in the assumption on how a man learns language. And here differences result from the fact whether the development of a child's language competencies is defined from the behavioural position, or from the nativist or sociolinguistic position. In the first case a school educational offer consists in providing a pupil with definitions to memorise and reproduce: a child is to perform tasks in accordance with a model and to memorise abstract elements of the language system, whilst the teacher seeks errors. This approach overlooks the level of awareness of the morphology of language of a specific child and here there is no chance of the child's potential and linguistic potential being supported. While the nativist approach refers to natural mechanisms of creative processing of information on language, derived from observations of its use in communication practice, which makes it possible to make use of the potential of language competence with which the child enters school.

Language education should support the process of formation of the world by pertaining to natural social contacts, in which there occurs exchange of symbolic messages, mostly language-based. In such a perspective the tasks of language education are at the same time exploratory and creative tasks, the aim of which is understandable and practical to pupils.

The relationship: man-language-reality contains in itself both a social system and the cultural system, which form the intersubjective sphere of meanings. The interdependence of these systems is described from the perspective of different disciplines of science, including the linguistic, psychological, sociological and pedagogical theories referred to here. If language education concentrates only on the language system or the abstractly separated relationship "Man-Language", then the enormous cognitive potential following from the interdependence of all the components of the individual's functioning in the world will not be used.

**Understanding the world and oneself in the world is not a state aspired by a man, but a dynamic process – the image of the world is incessantly created anew.** Understanding the symbolic system is a prerequisite necessary for functioning in the world. Into this system **education of the native language and a foreign language** is incorporated, with the experiencing individual being provided with new contexts for constructing the image of reality.