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## University Teachers of Linguistics and Self-Image of Their Profession

Konstantin Belousov<sup>a</sup>, Elena Erofeeva<sup>a</sup>, Tamara Erofeeva<sup>a</sup>, Yuliya Leshchenko<sup>b\*</sup>,  
Natalya Zelyanskaya<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Perm State National Research University, Bukireva 15, Perm, 614990, Russia

<sup>b</sup>Perm State Humanitarian-Pedagogical University, Sibirskaya 24, Perm, 614990, Russia

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### Abstract

The research is aimed at reconstructing a complex image of the teacher of linguistics profession. A profession image is characterized by complex field structure (includes the nucleus and the periphery) and consists of different semantic areas. Professional activity of a linguist appears to be of interest as it comprises different types of activity: teaching activity, organizational activity, scientific activity, publishing activity etc. The research material includes the results of a directed chain associative test with multiple reactions. The informants were Russian university teachers of linguistic subjects and master students of linguistics. Experimental data processing implied semantic classification of the reactions and their statistical analysis. The research was carried out in the “Semograph” information system at the stages of gathering the experimental data, classification of reactions, and compiling statistical tables. The research results demonstrate that the nucleus of the profession self-image is formed by the EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITY and SUBJECT DOMAIN semantic fields. However, the structure of professional activity image rearranges depending on the informants’ qualification.

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**Keywords:** self-image of profession; teacher; linguist; educational activity; subject domain; semantic analysis; statistical analysis

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\* Yuliya Leshchenko. Tel.: +7-961-759-4812; fax: +7- 342- 212-70-19  
E-mail address: [elevaer@gmail.com](mailto:elevaer@gmail.com)

## 1. Introduction

Research of a profession image/image of professional activity is of great scientific interest as its results possess both theoretical and practical value (Kaler et al., 1989; LeCroy & Stinson, 2004; Scherz & Oren, 2006; Smitson, 1974; Klimov, 1996). In the theoretical aspect an image of a profession can be dealt with in the contexts of: a) studying professional identity (in comparison to other identity forms: national, regional, gender etc.); b) constructing models of expert activity (studying instruments, forms and processes of expert activity realization); c) modeling connections between professional and common cognition and world image, and so on. In the practical aspect results of studying an image of a profession/professional activity can be used for choosing a profession, hiring for a job etc., as they enable to reproduce a profession/professional activity as a frame. Components of this frame will be typical scenarios of the activity, “embeddedness” of the profession into a social context, evaluating the profession, typical expectations, ideals, an image of the profession representative and many others.

Research of a profession image is vital for socially oriented professional spheres; therefore the majority of studies on this subject refer to the sphere of medicine (a doctor, nurse etc.) (Fealy, 2004; Fletcher, 2007), journalism (Ahva, 2013; Aldridge & Evetts, 2003), and education (a teacher, professor etc.) (Arnon & Reichel, 2007; Miller, 1989). Both public profession image formed by mass media, public opinion etc. (Jani et al., 1991; Mina et al., 2008), and self-image based on self-reflection of a particular profession representatives (Miller, 1989) are studied.

Among the methods of reconstructing a profession image the most widely spread are questionnaires, interviews, surveys, content analysis of data sources.

Attention to the professional activity of a teacher is characteristic for pedagogues who focus their attention on methodical aspects of pedagogic discourse, as well as for psychologists and sociologists who consider relationship between a teacher and students from the point of view of their psychological attitudes and social practices.

The array of research questions in these spheres is singularly wide, although practically all of them ignore the fact that a university teacher is to be a scientist at the same time, and one’s educational activity is often determined by scientific notions. Moreover, educational activity is closely connected with certain social institutions (universities, faculties, chairs etc.), the place of its realization, emotions accompanying the activity and so forth. Professional activity in general, and especially that of a university teacher, finds its reflection in the whole personality structure, and in attitude to life as such.

Our research task is to reconstruct a complex profession image/image of professional activity of a university teacher of linguistics. The profession image is understood as subjective notions of a society and its separate groups of the specialists who realize themselves in the profession, of its specific features, characteristics and evaluations. The “image” reflects how something is perceived, imagined, recalled or evaluated (Mozer, 2004, p. 202). It can be studied how a profession is perceived from within, i.e. “self-image” which is characteristic for representatives of the same sphere of activity, and externally, forming by other social groups. In this paper we will concentrate on the “self-image” study, i.e. internal reflections of a group about their profession.

A profession image has a complex field-type structure and consists of the nucleus – the most frequent (typical) representations – and the periphery. Herewith, the image structure includes constituents from various semantic fields.

## 2. Objectives, methodology and research design

In the presented research the study of linguistics teachers’ profession self-image was based on a subtype of a directed chain associative test with multiple reactions – the method of naming words of a certain row (semantic group/category). Associative experiments of this type are aimed at revealing category boundaries and its structure (see, e.g., Erofeeva & Pepelyaeva, 2011).

We assume that this method also enables representing a profession image in form of a hierarchic structure of interconnected semantic domains each of which is characterized by its own weight in the general complex profession image.

The informants were university teachers who instruct in various linguistic subjects (from foreign language practice to theoretical lectures in general linguistics). The informants’ places of work are philological faculties and foreign language faculties of Russian universities.

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