

Reflections on the Work of R.O. Šor: Materials from Institutional Archives

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Abstract:

The work of R.O. Šor (1894-1939) is examined through materials held in the archives of institutions in which she worked. Particularly important is the text of her self-criticism of 1932 in which she examines the formation of her own ideas and the influences on her work. This is supplemented with reflections on her published work and new information about aspects of her contribution to Soviet linguistic thought in the 1920s and 1930s that have remained unexplored. This brings new light to bear on Šor's work by illustrating her relationship to European linguistic thought and the development of Soviet intellectual life in the period of the ascendancy of the ideas of N.Ja. Marr.

Key words: R.O. Šor, N.Ja. Marr, Soviet linguistics, sociological method, language planning

It would be difficult not to admire the achievements of Rozalija Osipovna Šor (1894-1939) as one of the first women in Russia to take full advantage of the institutional changes brought about by the Revolution and to overcome the significant historical obstacles to building a significant career in philology. Along with Ol'ga Mixajlovna Frejdenberg (1890-1955), Šor made a very significant contribution to the scholarship of the period, even while having to deal with the entrenched attitudes of many of her male colleagues. In a recent book, Vladimir Mixailovič Alpatov notes that Šor had some important attributes for a scholar, being hard-working, erudite, with a talent for writing in an interesting way and clearly formulating her ideas but lacked a certain independence in her ideas, engaging with themes that were popular at the time and combining ideas in an eclectic fashion¹. It is difficult to argue with this evaluation. It is probably here that Šor differs from Frejdenberg who, despite coming under the influence of established scholars, including Nikolaj Jakovlevič Marr (1865-1934), managed to achieve a level of unity in her work that evades that of Šor.

It is, however, significant that Šor herself recognized precisely this failing in her work and was quite open about it. On 12 February 1932 Šor delivered a self-critical paper at the Scientific Research Institute of Linguistics [*Naučno-issledovatel'skii institut jazykoznanija*, NIJaz] on her methodological errors². To my knowledge this paper has never been published, but is held, along with a range of other materials relating to Šor's career, in the fond of the Institute of the Peoples of the East [*Institut narodov Vostoka*], initially the Institute of the Ethnic and National Cultures of the Soviet East [*Institut ètničeskix i nacional'nyx kul'tur sovetskogo vostoka*] and subsequently the Institute of Nationalities [*Institut nacional'nostej*] and the Institute of Language and Writing [*Institut jazyka i pis'mennosti*] in the Archive of the Academy of Sciences in Moscow. Šor was elected the secretary of the Institute in 1927 and, in 1929, a full member of the Institute. Like most other papers of the genre it sometimes makes for excruciating reading, but in this case it is not without scholarly interest since it does cast a considerable light on the evolution of her ideas, especially on the early parts of her career.

Šor begins by noting how her own original views were formed within the Filipp Fedorovič Fortunatov (1848-1914) school before Revolution, which she argues was more eclectic than the Jan Baudouin de Courtenay (1845-1929) school and led to the development of formalistic studies of language which reached an extreme among certain of Fortunatov's followers, such as Mixail Nikolaevič Peterson (1885-1962)³. She argues, however, that her attitude towards this school was from the beginning somewhat sceptical because she simultaneously studied literature, which led her

¹ Alpatov 2012, p. 159-173; cf. also 2009.

² ARAN, fond 677, inventory 3, document 107, p. 23-34.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 24.

far away from idealist thought and formalism⁴. Thus while she was engaged with the Moscow Linguistic Circle in which formalist ideas in literature were being developed, she argues that to the extent that she focused on Western European literature she came under the influence of Vladimir Maksimovič Friče (1870-1929)⁵. Friče was at this time chief representative of the so-called «sociological method» which was presented in opposition to the «formal method». Šor's main encounter with Friče is actually much more likely to have occurred while she was working at the Institute of Language and Literature [*Institut jazyka i literatury*] under the auspices of the Russian Association of Scientific Research Institutes in the Social Sciences [*Rossijskaja asociacija naučno-issledovatel'skix institutov obščesvennyx nauk*, RANION], which began in 1922. Friče was the director of the Institute, and in 1928 became the chair of RANION, while Šor worked in the linguistic section of the Institute as a Research Fellow [*naučnyj sotrudnik 1-go razrjada*], and in 1925-1926 acted as the secretary of the section⁶. Šor argued that Friče's conception was a «materialist» and «sociological» conception of literature but, echoing the critique of the «vulgar sociologism» of the Friče school in the early 1930s, she admits it was too «mechanical» and too ready to adopt the ideas of Georgi Plekhanov (1856-1918) about literature as a reflection of the economic structure of society⁷. In her early work she tried to apply this sociological conception to language, but in doing so remained close to the «bourgeois» sociology of the West. The result was that her work began to develop as a combination of the Russian sociological conception of literature, into which ideas from the French «sociological school» and German idealist philosophy of language were incorporated in an eclectic fashion⁸.

From the outset, as a scholar working in linguistics, Šor claims to have related sceptically to the idea that linguists should work to reconstruct the Indo-European, and other proto-languages, and was more attracted by semantic-stylistic descriptions of particular languages, and by the comparative critique of dialects. This led her away from neo-grammarians and towards social-historical conception of language⁹. However, in developing this area of study she constructed an eclectic combination of the 3 trends. Looking back on her early work in 1932, she regarded the fundamental feature of her outlook not to be «sociological school» of Ferdinand de Saussure but the allegedly idealist, so-called «logical German school»,

⁴ By the late 1920s «formalism» was already a term of abuse approximating «bourgeois-idealist» linguistics and Šor clearly uses the terms as a pair in the 1932 document.

⁵ ARAN, fond 677, inventory 3, document 107, p. 24.

⁶ GARF, fond A-4655, inventory 1, document 367, p. 64.

⁷ ARAN, fond 677, inventory 3, document 107, p. 24. Friče's place in the development of Soviet literary scholarship is particularly poorly studied, along with the «sociological method» in general. One rare study is Rakov 1986.

⁸ ARAN, fond 677, inventory 3, document 107, p. 24.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 25.

which was more philosophically sophisticated but also «more dangerous» than Saussure¹⁰. By the «logical German school» it seems Šor had in mind the school of phenomenologists that had risen from the students of Franz Brentano (1838-1917), and who may be more accurately regarded as philosophers in the Austrian realist tradition than in the German idealist tradition¹¹. Chief among the figures who influenced the development of early Soviet linguistics was the Swiss philosopher Anton Marty (1847-1914).

The attraction of Saussure's work for Šor derived from the two fundamental elements which she discerned there: the insistence on «a qualitative difference between social and natural phenomena, and primacy of social over individual»¹². Like most readers in Russia and beyond at the time, Šor interpreted Saussure as making ontological claims about language as a static system, rather than, as was actually the case, developing an epistemological paradigm or heuristic that treated language as a synchronic system in order to carry out certain types of analysis¹³. She thus regarded Saussure as holding a model of society that was fundamentally Durkheimian, i.e. a unified systematic totality in which class was not regarded as a fundamental concern. In the 1932 paper Šor stated she had then adopted certain ideas much too uncritically: Saussure's conception of language as collective-psychological, language as sign, static system and language as forms¹⁴.

The reason for this uncritical adoption Šor blamed on the influence of «idealistic-logical» school of Marty and, refracted through him, E. Husserl (though Husserl had actually not been a student of Marty)¹⁵. Although Šor does not explicitly say so, these influences undoubtedly came via Gustav Gustavovič Špet (1879-1937), whom Šor, along with Grigorij Osipovič Vinokur (1896-1947), had encountered at meetings of the Moscow Linguistic Circle¹⁶. Šor had become much more involved with Špet and his group of colleagues and students at the State Academy for Artistic Studies [*Gosudarstvennaja akademija xudožestvennyx nauk, GAXN*], where Šor had begun working in 1924. Among the scholars regularly attending the meetings of the Špet-directed philosophy section at

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ On this distinction cf., especially, Smith 1995.

¹² ARAN, fond 677, inventory 3, document 107, p. 25.

¹³ For an interesting discussion about this cf. Thibault 1997. However, the error is at least understandable given that the model of *langue* that results from Saussure's methodological move is indeed «static and closed», while he does not provide a coherent alternative model based on a different methodological option.

¹⁴ ARAN, fond 677, inventory 3, document 107, p. 25.

¹⁵ Both Marty and Husserl had emerged from the school of Brentano, though developed quite different perspectives. Cf., *inter alia*, Rollinger 1999, p. 209-244.

¹⁶ Špet wrote much about Marty's ideas about language, though often mystified rather than clarified the ideas, blurring the distinction between the ideas of Marty and W. von Humboldt. Cf., for instance, Špet 1922 [2005] and 1927 [1999].

GAXN were Vinokur, the philosopher Aleksej Fedorovič Losev (1893-1988) and the philosopher and former member of what is now known as the Mikhail Baxtin Circle Matvej Isaevič Kagan (1889-1937). Although Šor was assigned to the folklore subsection of the literary section of GAXN, the archives of the Institute contain the theses and accounts of the discussions of papers that Šor delivered at the philosophy section¹⁷. Šor highlighted two fundamental elements in these ideas: the structural quality of linguistic meaning, i.e. the refraction of the doctrine of the inner form that had arisen in idealist linguistic philosophy of the beginning of the 19th century, and the idea of language as sign. While Šor argued in 1932 that her literary training motivated her to try to overcome these ideas, in trying to do so she followed the same line as Valentin Nikolaevič Vološinov (1895-1936) and Aleksandr Alekseevič Xolodovič (1906-1977) in some of his work – towards idea of the «word as a thing» [*slovo kak vešč'*]¹⁸. This neo-Platonic rendering of Marty's argument actually derived from Špet, but Šor did not say so directly. In any case, this is what allegedly lay behind the eclecticism of her 1926 book *Language and Society* [*Jazyk i obščestvo*]¹⁹.

In actual fact it is the attempt to sociologize Marty's notion of *inner form* that is among the most interesting parts of *Language and Society*. While the notion of *inner form* was already familiar to adherents of the Wilhelm von Humboldt tradition within linguistic thought, Marty's own understanding of the term was quite different²⁰. For Marty language was not (as for Humboldt) inseparably connected to (or parallel to) the mind but, rather, the semantic material that the mind employs in order to evoke a meaning in the mind of the interlocutor. This idea was developed in contradistinction to Wilhelm Wundt's idea that the purpose of speaking was to express his or her own psychic condition. In the Wundtian formulation there was no gap between mind and language. Thus, while for Wundt a word *has* a meaning, for Marty the meaning is something that is *evoked* in the mind of the interlocutor. The speaker thus approaches the language with a purpose, teleologically, making a conscious choice between the means of expression that are available. Motivated by the requirements of communication, that is, striving to be understood correctly, the speaker selects the form that is broadly connected with the desired meaning, but it may well happen that an exact correspondence is unavailable. In this case the speaker alights on an analogous or contiguous form which he or she regards as closely enough related to guide the receiver towards the desired meaning in a particular context. «Context», in this sense, is what Karl Bühler (1879-1963) would later term the «symbol» and «deictic

¹⁷ RGALI, fond 941, inventory 14, document 10, p. 18, p. 64.

¹⁸ ARAN, fond 677, inventory 3, document 107, p. 26.

¹⁹ Šor 1926.

²⁰ Marty develops his main ideas in the work Marty 1908. For an extended discussion of this aspect of Marty's work, cf. Funke 1924 and, in general, Mulligan (ed.), 1990.

fields» against which the hearer discerns the particular, intentional meaning of the word²¹. Bühler, it should be noted, was also discussed at the GAXN philosophy section meetings and exerted a considerable influence on Soviet thinkers such as Lev Semenovič Vygotskij (1896-1934) and V.N. Vološinov²². It was this metaphorical or «auxiliary» concept that Marty called the «inner speech form». In employing a form in such a way the speaker exerts an influence on the development of the language even though he or she may have had no intention of doing so. This becomes, for Marty, the main mechanism of semantic change, which is purposeful and thus teleological, but nevertheless unplanned. The «auxiliary» concept may become so widespread and habitual that the older meaning may slip out of usage completely, usurped by the new meaning, and hardly a word in the vocabulary of any language remains unaffected. As one contemporary commentator put it, for Marty «inner form» is the «guiding principle of semasiological development»²³. The first person to speak of the «*rise and fall of the Roman Empire*» or of a «*poor piece of work*» was engaging in precisely this operation. However, «the principle of “inner form” does not apply to the meanings of words alone, but also to the meanings of sentences or parts of them (Marty’s “meaning” includes “grammatical function”): «If we say: “he will come”, the original meaning of will is volition. Looking for more exact expression of the idea of futurity than the one current at that time, the English language hit upon this same form as being akin in meaning and apt to produce in the hearer, with the help of the context, the desired psychic reaction; the form *will*, strictly speaking, did not develop into an auxiliary of futurity, but was adopted as such. The idea of volition is the “inner form” for the idea of futurity; the old meaning may or may not be present in the new one»²⁴.

In October 1924 Šor presented a paper to the philosophy section at GAXN about Karl Otto Erdmann’s book *Die Bedeutung des Wortes* in which the author discussed the «secondary meaning» and «emotional value» of words²⁵. This work was important for, among others, Vološinov. Erdmann argued that the creative use of language involves not the pragmatic utilization but the *forgetting* of the etymological meaning. For Šor, the main problem is Erdmann’s attempt to solve the problem of polysemy without an analysis of the structure of the word, confusing linguistic meaning [*značenie, gegenstandliche Beziehungen*], the intentional meaning [*Bedeutungsintention*] and the existing meaning [*Bedeutungserfüllung*]. Erdmann argued it is impossible to define the exact sense of a word by analysis of its meaning, and that emotional value is not the signification

²¹ Bühler 1934 [1990].

²² RGALI, fond 491, inventory 14, document 10, p. 24-25; cf also Brandist 2004 and 2007.

²³ Leopold 1929, p. 257.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 258; cf. also Spinicci 1988.

²⁵ The question was particularly topical due to the publication of new editions of Erdmann’s book in 1922 (Erdmann 1900 [1922]) (RGALI, fond 941, inventory 14, document 10, p. 18).

[*značimost'*] in the full sense but «proto-signification» [*praznačimost'*]. Šor argued that at best Erdmann provides good material to illustrate Marty's notion of *inner form*.

Returning to the 1932 self-criticism, Šor points out that the perspective developed in *Language and Society* differs from Saussure because of the introduction of a developmental model of language based on the structured character of the sign, the doctrine of the inner form and then posing the question of the reflection of social phenomena in language²⁶. For Šor, Saussure's synchrony and diachrony are but a single, two-sided task. Šor felt she had achieved certain «mechanically sociological» interpretations of a series of linguistic phenomena since she had searched only for the reflections of social phenomena in language and ignored language as activity. This was, she now held, parallel to the limitations of the sociological approach to literature as superstructure developed by Valerian Fedorovič Pereverzev (1882-1968) and his school. Language was examined not in its actuality, but as passive reflection of classes, and she had failed to distinguish between classes and professional groups²⁷. However, her most significant mistake at this time was to base her ideas about the «inner form of language» wholly on Marty's position, which allegedly aimed to prove the complete separation of the inner form of language from its social base, and which also led her to separate the evaluation of the sign from its content²⁸. Interestingly, however, these separations do not follow directly from Marty's analysis, in which the historical nature of changes such as the English «will» discussed above is inescapable, even though his analysis was based on an uncompromising methodological individualism. Following *Language and Society*, Šor claimed that it was in her article «Expression and Meaning» [*Vyraženie i značenie*] that uncritical borrowings from Saussure's «sociological school», Marty's logical trend and theory of substratum as presented by Hugo Schuchardt (1842-1927) were combined with a Plekhanov-style «hieroglyphism»²⁹. This last was the contention, developed by Plekhanov in his polemics with neo-Kantian philosophers and with the «empiriomonism» of Aleksandr Aleksandrovič Bogdanov (1873-1928), that our mental representations of forms and relations are «hieroglyphics» that correspond to reality³⁰.

The search of a new base for construction of sociological linguistics led Šor to Japhetic theory. Before 1927 Japhetic theory had appeared to be more of a concrete theory of the culture of the Mediterranean rather than a general methodological conception and she did not detect the «elements of a dialectical materialist theory of language» that began to enter the theory

²⁶ ARAN, fond 677, inventory 3, document 107, p. 26.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 26-27.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 27.

³⁰ For a general discussion, cf. Steila 1991, p. 8-13.

between 1924 and 1927³¹. She did write some works on Japhetic theory, such as her discussion of the theory in the collection *Obščestvennye nauki v SSSR* [Social Sciences in the USSR]³², in which half of her article was dedicated to the Japhetic conception of European culture, with discussion of the «general methodological achievements» of Japhetic theory appearing at the end. The main thing she found in Japhetic theory at this time was the critique of comparativism, which chimed with her approach, and she noticed the «materialist» conception of language, but interpreted it only in the spirit of the cultural-historical constructions of Schuchardt. She did not, at this time, regard questions of the origin of language as fundamental, and remained wedded to the mistaken position of Saussure, that the origin of a social phenomenon is separate from questions of its history³³.

Šor also discusses her articles that polemicize against Evgenij Dmitrievič Polivanov (1891-1938) and Afanasij Matveevič Seliščev (1886-1942), with whom she had worked at the Institute of Language and Literature: «Paradoxical Orthodoxy» [*Paradoksal'naja ortodoksal'nost'*]³⁴, «On the "Spoiling" of the Russian Language» [*O «porče» russkogo jazyka*]³⁵, and «On the Neologisms of the Revolutionary Epoch» [*O neologizmax revoljucionnoj èpoxi*]³⁶, which were marked by an underestimation of the changes from one historical epoch to another. Reviewing Seliščev's well-known book about the linguistic changes brought about by the Revolution, Šor polemicized against the author's contention that the innovations of revolutionary period were spoiling the Russian language. Where Seliščev complained about the spoiling of the language he was actually mourning the destruction of one outdated standard. Neither did she agree with Polivanov's article about Russian language of the epoch where he adduces political examples derived from sources in the Communist youth movement, the *Komsomol*, for she argues that the very selection of material was politically slanted. Polivanov was championing the creativity of one layer of revolutionary intelligentsia. Here Šor argued she had repeated the same mistake that Boris Mixajlovič Ėjxenbaum (1886-1959) had made in viewing language of the proletarian revolution as a certain linguistic tradition from Nikolaj Gavrilovič Černyševskij (1828-1889) and radicals of 1860s and 1870s. Šor admitted she had been mistaken to argue against Polivanov on purely methodological grounds, accusing him of a poor knowledge of «bourgeois» linguistics, because it placed her on the same side as Polivanov³⁷.

³¹ ARAN, fond 677, inventory 3, document 107, p. 28.

³² Šor 1928b.

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ Curiously the title of Šor 1929b is incorrect in the 1932 paper.

³⁵ Šor 1928a.

³⁶ Šor 1929a.

³⁷ ARAN, fond 677, inventory 3, document 107, p. 30.

Taken together Šor admitted these errors make up a system of mistakes based on philosophical and sociological factors. Not only are her articles of the period marked by an uncritical «westernism» but also by a tendency to view science as something that stands above class divisions.

As V.M. Alpatov notes, there are significant areas of Šor's work that remain obscure to us because they did not result in publications³⁸. Her involvement in the creation of alphabets for the hitherto unstandardized languages of the East was a particularly clear example. In her 1932 paper Šor argues that the «*perestroika*» of her linguistic views began in 1929 and that the crucial factor was her involvement in the huge language building projects and Latinization campaigns aimed at the languages of the Soviet East³⁹.

To illuminate this aspect of Šor's work we need to turn to different archival material, chiefly that of the Azerbaijan State Scientific Research Institute [*Azerbajdžanskij gosudarstvennyi naučno-issledovatel'skij institut*, AzGNII], held in Baku⁴⁰. Here we can find an outline of Šor's activities in the crucial period of 1929-1930. Šor played a leading role in the Institute's section of language, literature and art which developed projects to subject the culture of the Turkic peoples of Azerbaijan, the other peoples living in the territory and the peoples that are ethnically connected in other parts of the USSR to systematic study⁴¹. The section was divided into a number of subdivisions, with Šor mainly, but not exclusively, involved in the language section. Here she directed a team to study the phonetics of Turkic dialects, collecting a range of recordings and other materials pertaining to consonantism, vocalisms and intonations⁴². Under Šor's direction, the team began preparatory activities to prepare a dialectological atlas of Azerbaijan, detailing instructions for field work and the collection of materials⁴³. This was based on recent German dialectological research (Ferdinand Wrede [1863-1934], Viktor Maksimovič Žirmunskij [1891-1971]) with use of questionnaires to delineate individual phonemes, their modifications and combinations⁴⁴. Šor organized special expeditions to study specific dialects in parts of Azerbaijan, with the aim of creating a comparative description of the various dialects. With representatives from Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, Moscow and the Central Committee for the New Turkic Alphabet [*Central'nyj komitet novogo tjurkskogo alfavita*], Šor also organized a conference aimed at developing standards for telegraphy and stenography. She also organized a conference on mountain-Jewish lan-

³⁸ Alpatov 2012, p. 170.

³⁹ ARAN, fond 677, inventory 3, document 107, p. 30.

⁴⁰ GAAR, fond 387.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, inventory 1, document 340, p. 1.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 20.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

guages, the problem of terminology and orthography and worked on the preparation of a handbook of the phonetics of Turkic languages⁴⁵.

After visiting Leningrad in March 1928 and again in September 1929, in particular visiting the laboratory of experimental phonetics of the Institute for the Comparative History of the Literatures and Languages of the West and East [*Naučno-issledovatel'skij institut sravnitel'noj istorii literatur i jazykov Zapada i Vostoka*, ILJaZV] led by Lev Vladimirovič Ščerba (1880-1944) and the phonographic archive of the State Institute for the History of Arts [*Gosudarstvennyj institut istorii iskusstv*, GIII]⁴⁶, Šor set up there an office of experimental phonetics and a dictionary-terminological office⁴⁷. A sketch of the results of the research into experimental phonetics then appears as Šor's main planned publication in 1930-1931 in both AzGNII and Institute of Language and Writing in Moscow⁴⁸. She also formulated institutional projects to study the history and social dialectology of Azeri Turks, and also Iranian and «Japhetic» languages, the names of means of production in Azerbaijan⁴⁹.

In the later parts of her 1932 self-criticism, the evident accommodations to contemporary authorities come to the fore and the reflection on her methodological orientation becomes less revealing. She argues that as secretary of Institute of the Peoples of the East in Moscow she made the mistake of siding with «bourgeois» linguists against Marr. She then, in a particularly sickening part of the paper, says she must sincerely thank the Marrist hatchet man Valerian Borisovič Aptekar' (1899-1937) for pointing out how Japhetic theory involved a complete reconsideration of the categories of «bourgeois» linguistics⁵⁰. This enabled her to begin to re-evaluate her relationship with Saussure's ideas, which first begins to appear in her polemic with Vološinov⁵¹ and also in *Introduction to Materialist Linguistics* [*Vvedenie v materialističeskoe jazykoznanie*]⁵² where there occurs a rejection of Saussureanism as an idealist form of sociologism and an examination of Japhetic theory as «materialist» linguistics⁵³. This leads, at the end of the book, to a new position. Šor also says that she now tried to overcome the «formal logicism» of the German and French schools, and to re-examine the concept of *class*. This, she argued, appears centrally in her polemic with Georgij Konstantinovič Danilov (1896-1937) on the question

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 70-71.

⁴⁶ The archive was originally developed at the Institute of the Living Word (*Institut živogo slova*, IŽS) in Leningrad.

⁴⁷ ARAN, fond 677, inventory 3, document 107, p. 146, p. 110.

⁴⁸ GAAR, fond 387, inventory 1, document 340, p. 30; ARAN, fond 677, inventory 3, document 107, p. 115.

⁴⁹ GAAR, fond 387, inventory 1, document 340, p. 13.

⁵⁰ ARAN, fond 677, inventory 3, document 107, p. 31.

⁵¹ Cf. Šor 1929c.

⁵² Šor 1930.

⁵³ ARAN, fond 677, inventory 3, document 107, p. 31.

of the individual word and in article «Verb» [*Glagol*] for the *Great Soviet Encyclopaedia* [*Bol'shaja sovetskaja ènciklopedija*]⁵⁴. However, she argues, this resulted in a new form of eclecticism since she still had not understood the nature of «bourgeois» science at this point in history, and was led to adopt an abstract dialectic, with no concrete historical content in her polemic with Danilov. Thus she also tried to connect Saussure and Edward Sapir (1884-1939) in search of the origin of grammatical form (in the *BSE* article «Grammar» [*Grammatika*])⁵⁵. She argues that her «materialist» conception remained «mechanistic», with the actuality of the superstructure, and the idea of language as activity and as tool in class struggle missing. She claims that she was still too reliant on Friče and Plekhanov.

The 1930 discussion about linguistics, which led to the defeat of Polivanov's challenge to the claim of Marrists to the title of «Marxism in linguistics», finally led Šor to attempt to construct a new method based on the classics of Marxism-Leninism⁵⁶. *On the Paths to Marxist Linguistics* [*Na putjax k marksistskoj lingvistike*] was, methodologically, a step forward and constitutes a good collection of citations, but looked back to the mistakes of «bourgeois» linguistics still to be overcome⁵⁷. Šor still had an inadequate grounding in Marxist theory, and a lack of appreciation for party-mindedness [*partijnost'*] in linguistics. She ended her self-criticism with a plea to be understood as a scholar who had begun her work in the pre-Revolutionary period and then found it very difficult to make the necessary theoretical transition into the socialist period. This led her to many mistakes, often very crude ones, and she closes by saying she did not claim any leading position in linguistics but needed to follow line of Party⁵⁸.

Though much of the self-criticism document is symptomatic of the mandatory ideological genuflection typical of the time when it was written, following the defeat of the Polivanov discussion and in the immediate wake of the defeat of the *Jazykofront* challenge to the dominance of Marxism, the document is nevertheless interesting for the light it sheds on Šor's early work. The latter parts are undoubtedly more interesting from a purely socio-historical perspective, but even here it does shed some light on the intellectual dynamics of the time. There is a real sense that the pressure of the debates in the 1920s really did lead Šor to try to unify her thinking and overcome the eclecticism of her work of the period. As in the parts of *Language and Society* dealing with the social pragmatics of language change, this showed the potential for some interesting developments that could

⁵⁴ Hereafter *BSE*. ARAN, fond 677, inventory 3, document 107, p. 31. Šor's contribution to the *BSE* on linguistic questions was very significant indeed.

⁵⁵ ARAN, fond 677, inventory 3, document 107, p. 31. On Šor's place in the Soviet reception of Sapir, cf. Lähteenmäki 2014.

⁵⁶ ARAN, fond 677, inventory 3, document 107, p. 32.

⁵⁷ Šor 1931; ARAN, fond 677, inventory 3, document 107, p. 32.

⁵⁸ ARAN, fond 677, inventory 3, document 107, p. 33.

have enabled her to transcend her sources and construct an original theoretical edifice. The work Šor carried out in the institutes dealing with the languages of the national minorities could also perhaps have led her to produce work of a more coherent theoretical character. However, the requirement to champion statutory over scientific authority as the decade came to a close led her into making a series of «mechanical» accommodations that precluded any capacity to work through the various aspects of her previous work in search of an internal resolution rather than external accommodation. It must have been particularly galling that after so many accommodations, in January 1935 Šor was called to account for the appearance of «Trotskyist contraband» in her work because she had recommended the book of Konstantin Borisovič Barxin (1876-1938) and Evgenija Samsonovna Istrina (1883-1957) *Methodology for Russian Language in Middle School* [*Metodika russskogo jazyka v srednej škole*] (1935) as «fully living up to the needs of the current state of linguistic science»⁵⁹. The main charge was that the bibliography of the book included works by a number of people who had been repressed such as Danilov, Seliščev and others. Šor was compelled to deliver a humiliating apology in writing for her oversights and argued that her intellectual and political reconstruction in the light of the teaching of the Party would be a guarantee against the repetition of such mistakes in the future⁶⁰. Given such circumstances, the publication of Russian translations of landmarks of western linguistics that Šor pursued at the end of her life appears a particularly courageous enterprise.

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⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 184-184rev.

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