

The critique on individualistic subjectivism in *Marxism and philosophy of language*

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Resumo: A obra de Mikhail Bakhtin e Valentin Volochínov, *Marxismo e Filosofia da Linguagem* (2009), é fundamental para os estudos da linguagem no que tange à compreensão da língua sob uma perspectiva materialista, que leve em conta a sua natureza material e ideológica. É importante compreender que os autores partem da crítica sobre diferentes tendências teóricas para o desenvolvimento da sua concepção de língua. Assim, contemplam duas principais tendências do pensamento filosófico linguístico, as quais denominam objetivismo abstrato e subjetivismo idealista. Fazer a leitura da crítica a essas tendências é fundamental na compreensão da construção de sua concepção de língua, em relação com a ideologia. Consideramos que, para realizarmos uma leitura aprofundada, é necessário buscarmos as fontes sobre as quais essa crítica recai. Por conseguinte, propomos a leitura em torno de um dos representantes do subjetivismo idealista. Trata-se de Karl Vossler, citado por Bakhtin / Volochínov, com sua obra *The spirit of language in civilization* (1932). Neste limite de espaço, nos detemos unicamente na investigação da obra desses representantes de uma tendência do pensamento filosófico linguístico, o subjetivismo idealista, não desconsiderando a importância de proceder à investigação semelhante em torno do objetivismo abstrato.

Palavras-chave: língua; subjetivismo idealista; perspectiva materialista.

Abstract: The work of Valentin Volochínov, *Marxism and Philosophy of Language* (2009), is fundamental for the studies of language in what concerns to the comprehension of language under a materialistic perspective, which takes into account its material and ideological nature. It is important to understand that the author starts from the critique on different theoretical tendencies to the development of their conception of language. Thus, he reflects on two main trends of the linguistic philosophical thought, which he designates as abstract objectivism and idealistic subjectivism. Reading the critique on these trends is fundamental to the comprehension of the development of his conception of language, in relation with ideology. We consider that, to make a deep reading, it is necessary to seek the sources on which this critique lies. Therefore, we propose the reading of a representative philosopher of idealistic subjectivism. It is Karl Vossler, in *The spirit of language in civilization* (1932). In this limit of space, we will stand only on the investigation of the work of this representative of one trend of the linguistic philosophical thought, the idealistic subjectivism, not disregarding the importance of a similar investigation into the abstract objectivism.

Keywords: language; individualistic subjectivism; materialist perspective.

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The work *Marxism and Philosophy of Language* (1973)², from V. Volochinov, constitutes a fundamental study to the philosophy of language, as it raises questions about some of the most important problems in the history of linguistic studies. Some of these questions and thesis proposed by the author are now present in most of the research within the sciences of language and also reverberates in an interdisciplinary way. The material concept of language, though, developed from a Marxist perspective of language and from the approach of the sign by its ideological value, is, perhaps, the greatest legacy that this author has left to us, as this view is foundational to new theories about the meaning and subjectivity and the ideological sign makes the language an object of recognition of history.

In addition to the fact that *Marxism and Philosophy of Language* is a pioneer work in the treatment of some of the most important issues within the studies of language and redefines the language as an object of study, it is also connected to the linguistic philosophical thought that was present at the time of its publish. Such connection does not consist in a support for those trends of thought, but in a critic on these theoretical positions. Onto that critique, Volochinov's thesis and reflections are built and developed in this work (1973).

The aim of this article is to deepen a reflection on the critique of Volochinov (*op. cit.*) about a trend of thought in philosophy of language, the idealistic subjectivism. In order to comprehend how this critique is developed, we will proceed to the reading of one of its main representatives, Karl Vossler, in his work *Spirit of Language in Civilization* (1932). It is important to understand that the author makes such critique starting from what he considers to be the main problems that the studies of language had not been able to solve. His critique is based on the need of a theory that manages to treat the language as an object of study that takes into consideration its symbolic and ideological nature.

1. A critique on one trend of thought of philosophy of language

The first chapter of Part II of *Marxism and Philosophy of Language* (1973, p. 45) inquires about the object of study of the philosophy of language. The author enquires:

“What, in fact, is the subject matter of the philosophy of language? Where are we to find it? What is its concrete, material existence like? By what method or methods can we come to grips with its mode of existence? (...) But what is language, and what is word?”

From these questions, the author formulates hypotheses about how to deal with such issues. Those hypotheses point to the difficulties in dividing the language as an object of study in isolated parts. Neither the study of the physiological process of the production of sound nor the sound perception is capable of keeping the symbolic and ideological nature of language.

The same is true to the mental activity of the speaker and the listener; it cannot feature a process in which we can find the language as a “specific object”. (*op. Cit.*, p. 46). So, we

2 We work with the edition published in New York, in 1973, by Seminar Press, in which Valentim Nikolaevich Volochinov is considered to be the author. There is a note, however, that assumes the cooperation of Mikhail Bakhtin.

understand that neither the physical, nor the physiological or the psychological aspects of language are enough to establish the language as a specific object of study.

From this point on, the author questions the treatment of such problems by the philosophy of language. In the following excerpt, we can find the introduction of the critique to the two orientations of the philosophical linguistic thought:

In the philosophy of language and in the related metodological sectors of general linguistics, we observe **two basic trends** in the solution of our problem, i.e., **the problem of the identification and the delimitation of language as a specific object of study**. Differences over this issue also imply, of course, fundamental differences between these two trends over all other issues concerning the study of language.

The first trend can be termed **individualistic subjectivism** in the study of language, and the second, **abstract objectivism**. (op. cit., p. 48)

The statement in italics explains that the main problem raised is to define how language can be taken as an object of study. For this reflection, it is proposed to think about two theoretical orientations called individualistic subjectivism and abstract objectivism³.

In this paper, we propose to proceed on a reading on the critique of the individualistic subjectivism, which has among the main representatives Karl Vossler⁴. His work *Spirit of Language in Civilization*⁵ (1932) allows us to identify the characteristics explored by Volochínov (1973) and reflect on how to deal with some problems of language studies within the trend of thought of the individualistic subjectivism. In the following excerpt, we can read a definition of this theoretical orientation:

The first trend considers the basis of language (language meaning all linguistic manifestations without exception) to be the individual creative act of speech. The source of language is the individual psyche. The laws of language creativity – and language is, it assumes, a continuous process, an increasing creativity – are the laws of individual psychology, and these laws are just what the linguist and the philosopher of language are supposed to study. (Volochínov, 1973., p. 48)

We comprehend that the notion of language of the individualistic subjectivism is built on its conception of subjectivity. The first observation that we can make is that the act of speech is the main point of interest of its studies, that is, the investigation of the act of speech is in the core of the comprehension of the nature of language. This fact relates to the way this orientation understands the concept of subject. For the individualistic subjectivism, language is an individual creation, and origins inside the individual. Here, the subject remains in a privileged place that controls the expression. The term *language creativity* refers to something that is created in every act of enunciation. Volochínov (1973) formulates propositions summarizing the fundamental positions of this orientation. We present the first and the second proposition, which seem to open the way to think about the conceptions of language and subject to the idealistic subjectivism:

3 In note, the author highlights the difficulty of a fully appropriate term, that would cover the complexity of the trends, especially the designation of the first trend.

4 Karl Vossler was a German linguist, who followed the ideas of Benedetto Croce and lived between the end of the 20th century and the first half of the 21st century.

5 We use the English edition from 1932. We know that this work was published in the beginning of the 20th century, under the influence of the thought of Wilhelm Von Humboldt and Benedetto Croce. Among the arrival of the Saussure language studies, Vossler's work did not converge to the positivist approach of language.

1. Language is activity, an unceasing process of creation (*energeia*⁶) realized in individual speech acts;
2. The laws of language creativity are the laws of individual psychology; (p. 48)

From this proposition we comprehend the language as a process of individual creation, which occurs in the act of speech. At this point, we turn to one of the representatives of the idealistic subjectivism to understand the way this conception is developed. Volochinov (*op. cit.*) brings the school of Vossler⁷ as one of their contemporary representations. We highlight the following statements:

In recent times, the first trend of the philosophy of language, having cast off the bonds of positivism, has once again achieved powerful growth and wide scope in the conception of its tasks through the Vossler school. The Vossler school is defined first and foremost by its decisive and theoretically grounded **rejection of linguistic positivism**, with its inability to see anything beyond the linguistic form (primarily, the phonetic form as the most “positive” kind) and the elementary psychophysiological act of its generation. (*op. cit.*, p. 50)

The first aspect that calls our attention in this excerpt is the fact that the principles of Vossler school oppose to a positivist conception of language, which is postulated by Volochinov as the fundamental characteristic of this school⁸. In the reading of *Spirit of Language in Civilization* (1932), the use of the term *spirit* keeps the positivists principles away, as it leads its investigations under a metaphysical plan and grant the linguistic issues a subjectivist and idealistic character. To Vossler, a linguistic community is built on a series of elements which characterizes it as a national language and that constitutes the *national spirit*. Volochinov (1973) criticizes the use of the term “national spirit”, claiming that it is a common tendency of the idealists to look for support in the idea of *spirit* to explain issues related to style and meaning. According to him (*op. cit.*), language should be considered under a historical perspective and investigated as a material object, which means to think about its relations to what belong to the social and historical order.

Vossler (1932) reflects on what gives languages their specificities. Since all individuals own the same phonic organ, such explanation cannot come from a physiological perspective, as we read in the following statements:

Since all men possess in their ear and tongue the natural organs of speech, the particular linguistic equipment that distinguishes these peoples from one another has to be sought elsewhere than in the human senses. It is to be found in the Latin, Greek, French, German tongue, not in the tongue as such [...] (p. 115)

This thought calls our attention also because it is on the opposite direction to Saussure’s studies, whose objective was to found a general linguistics discipline. We comprehend that when Vossler (*op. cit.*) talks about the specificity of each language, as Latin, French, German, among others, he considers the necessity of an investigation under the

6 We understand that this refers to the Aristotelian concept of *energeia*, as, according to this concept, *energeia* is activity, which turns into praxis. It has to do with the individual activity of language creativity proposed by individualistic subjectivism, as Volochinov’s critique.

7 Karl Vossler was a German linguist, a supporter of the ideas of Benedetto Croce and lived between the end of nineteenth century and the first half of twentieth century.

8 According to Volochinov (1973), after Humboldt’s powerful work, the first trend lost space and depth with studies developed under the perspective of positivism. The Vossler school, however, was able to make a critique to such positivist approach and build an important path in the philosophy of language.

viewpoint of each language, in order to seek for the characteristics of each of them, and not in a general concept of language, as he claims. But where does this character of national language resides? Vossler explains as the following:

Human language is instrumentated differently by the Frenchman and the German. For instance, the former will emphasize something syntactically, where the latter uses a gesture or an intonation; where the one uses the future, the other uses the present; where one needs the subjunctive or a partitive article, the other is content with the indicative, or will dispense with an article. (1932, p. 115)

In this sense, there would not be the investigation into language in general, but into the specificities of the languages of each nation. In the search of the explanation of these differences, the author concludes that they are historically conditioned. However, he postulates that it is not a causal relationship between the languages and history, providing an explanation to the specificities of the languages that connects to the *national character*, as we observe in the following excerpt:

All these differences are historically conditioned; but in the final instance they are connected with the type of mind predominating in that particular language community, that is, with the 'national character'. (op. cit., p. 115)

Eventually, the author observes that this *national character* does not make a language to be characterized in a way and not another, but the language builds itself this character. Therefore, it seems that Vossler states about the national character, to soon explain that it is not *this character* the responsible factor for making a language what it is. What happens is that this character is formed in its use by the subjects who speak it. We comprehend this way according to his words:

The French do not speak French because they have a French attitude, type of mind, or character, but simply because they speak. Their language becomes French, not because some outside influence, but because of themselves; and through their speech, whatever and however it be, their national character is embodied and realized in what we call the French language. (op. cit., p. 116)

At least two issues deserve to be discussed here. The reason for what a language exists as so can be explained by the use of its speakers, which we recognize in the statement "Their language becomes French [...] because of themselves." (op. cit., p. 116) Consequently, we understand that the national character – of these speakers – happens and exists through language. However, our question about the nature of this national character has not been fully answered. One of the reasons of such difficulty resides in the fact that this *character* does not belong to a material order, or, at least, does not appear to us in a way that can be understood without being linked to the concept of "spirit".

At this point, we move towards the comprehension that Vossler puts the speaker in the core of his language studies, since he recognizes that he is responsible for constituting the language through the way the he uses it. Thus, we can also move to a wider understanding about the way this speaker is characterized in Vossler's thought. So far, we have encountered the primacy of a relation between language and the interior of the subject, over a relation that approximates language and exteriority. It seems that, according to this thought, the nation could be understood as a subject. And this subject is also set within the

limits of its “interior”, or, in other words, the national language is conceived according to the *national spirit* that exists inside this subject. Such conception raises important considerations. We bring, in this space, a series of Vossler’s reflections of great importance for the studies of language.

First, the author reflects on the predominance of a language over another. According to him, since ancient Greece or the Middle Age, wars did not only aimed power and wealth, but also decided on the culture that would predominate, and, with this, the language. Nevertheless, in the decade of 1930, period of the first edition of this work, the author believes that people would not let their language to be extinguished easily, as it was possible to observe that there were countries fighting for preserving their original language. This feeling of preservation would have to do with issues related to people’s consciousness of identity, as we observe in: “A language is defended more obstinately the more alive the feeling and the clearer the consciousness that it is a matter of preserving one’s own tribal, racial and national characteristics.” (1932, p. 119)

In addition, Vossler makes considerations about the fact that language is capable of gathering people (p. 120) and reflects in a very interesting way about the situations along history in which a language was forbidden to its people. According to him, those prohibitions gather people from a certain linguistic community in a way that those communities become even more powerful in their proud. Moreover, any word pronounced in the forbidden language becomes a gesture of war against the enemy.

Another question raised by Vossler (*op. cit.*, p. 17) is about the relation that the speakers maintain with their first language. He calls our attention to the fact that we call “mother tongue” the language that we learn from a maternal figure, in the bosom of the family. Such language would be the one we have been identified with since our childhood. From this point on, the author reflects on the relation between this language and the acquisition of the second one. We shall consider the following excerpt:

Even when he [the Frenchman] incorporates foreign words they become French to him; and when he learns English or Chinese, he does it on a French basis. Through practice and habituation he may achieve citizenship in any number of languages; but his spiritual home remains French, which he may deny or forget, but which he can no more lose than he can lose the experiences of his childhood. (*op. cit.*, p. 116)

On this reflection, the first language appears in an unabated position in the speakers’ *spirit*. In this way, it is presented as the national language which carries the national character which we previously talked about. The author also considers that the second language is a technical language, which is learned, whereas the first is “experienced language” (*op. cit.*, p. 115). We understand *experienced* as *lived*, apprehended through experience. According to Vossler, this process of experienced language only happens once in life. After this, there is only the acquisition of the technical language, which is the second.

It is interesting to understand how the author describes the first language:

Experienced language, therefore, on the one hand has the subjective, limited, and natural affective value of childhood: on the other, a value of achievement, which is objective, spiritual, and has a general human significance. (*op. cit.*, p. 117)

In this statement, we can observe the idealistic way in which the national character is described. It seems that the reasoning here is that, since the language is experienced

and apprehended in the childhood, it has a place in the spiritual core of its speakers, and maintain with them a relation which is mediated by the inner self. In this sense, maternal language occupies an hegemonic place, as it was an only language, and such understanding consists in an idealistic view.

At the moment, we comprehend that there is a specification about what constitutes the national feeling in relation to this first language, which would be the national language. The feeling of the speakers for such language is supported on a relation with their childhood, in which the language would be a gift inherited from the parents, and also a cultural heritage, seen by each one as the realization of the national *spirit*. (*op. cit.*) On this reflection, the author comprehends that: “National feeling, then, is dependent on national language, and oscillates between love and pride. The value we attach to our national language is our national pride.” (*op. cit.*, p. 117, 118)

Thus, Vossler moves forward to the treatment of the issues of stylistic order. According to Volochinov (1973), this concern strongly reverberates in Vossler’s concept of language. He calls the attention to the fact that Vossler, considering the individual act of speech as the object of study of the linguist, puts the artistic and aesthetic nature of the linguistic creativity in a primary position. Volochinov claims that, for the German author:

The main impetus to linguistic creativity is said to be the “linguistic taste”, a special variety of linguistic taste. Linguistic taste is that linguistic truth by which language lives and which the linguist must ascertain in every manifestation of language in order genuinely to understand and explain the manifestation in question. (1973, p. 50)

The style, to Vossler (1932), remains on the issues of the national language on the extent that a second language doesn’t have, in a first instance, the power to reflect the national feelings and pride. According to him, all that sounds beautiful, ugly or strange in the sounds of the foreign language is the ornamentation of this language. Such ornamentation is described in the following way:

It is the particular aspect of a language in general, its characteristic, individual, national, provincial, idiomatic nature, as opposed to its universal and personal nature. In its striving for unity and objectivity language is universal and personal, in its urge towards multiplicity and ornamentation it is individual. (*op. cit.*, p. 135)

In accordance with this reflection, the ornamentation would be the individual aspect, the national characteristics and its idiomatic nature, opposed to the universal aspect of language. However, we comprehend that individual does not oppose to national, as, following Vossler’s thought, the national language is embedded in the national feeling and pride of each one, and this is a characteristic that derives from a imaginary, because it is the relation with each speaker and his or her national feeling. In this way, language would be universal in the search for unity, but individual in its ornamentation.

In this sense, language is treated in a universalized and homogeneous way, and the style is mainly thought in terms of aesthetic pattern, in a way that the issues concerned to the heterogeneous nature of language and its unity are forgotten. This configures an idealistic view, and, thereupon, unreal concept of language.

The personal character of language refers to the speaker that uses all his or her senses to think, speak, listen, understand and answer, and which is situated in a linguistic community. We understand that this speaker, as situated in a community, seeks for unity and

for the linguistic exchange through what remains on the common plan. What belongs to the personal order is connected to the style. The search for the unity is associated with what belongs to the universal order.

With this point, we have reached the reasoning about Vossler's thought that leads us to the comprehension about the concept of language and subjectivity within the individualistic subjectivism. We shall pay attention to the following excerpt:

[...] if we wish to do justice to the special character of national languages, they have to be judged rather as styles than as languages. Nations are individuals, and as such they can express themselves through language and style, though they cannot speak. It is an illusion to think that the language of some particular nation can be spoken by the nation as such. The speakers are the many persons that constitute it. (1932, p. 137)

This reflection is important to our comprehension because it contains two essential points. First, it is possible to visualize what Volochínov (1973) teaches us about Vossler's stylistic and artistic concerns, as we mentioned previously. To this author (1932), the style characteristics should lead the linguistic studies, considering the relations between national language and style. About this relation, he explains that what must be questioned is not what is allowed and what is forbidden in language, as the grammarians do. We must question, though, what is aimed at and what the possibilities are (*op. cit.*). Therefore, such aspects constitute a relation of forces in the constitution of the aesthetic character of language. Vossler says: "In every national language there is an aesthetic will [...]" (*op. cit.*, p. 137) Such force is attributed to the *genius* or *spirit of a language*⁹. This *genius* or *spirit of language* concerns to a national style, to a style of a time, which exists for each individual as their own style. In this sense, the force of language lies on its aesthetic. Such aesthetic would be, according to this thought, linked to an imaginary of national identity. In this conception, the social and historical nature of language is lost.

The second point refers to the fact that the author considers, as we understand, the nation as an individual, because it only speaks through its speakers. Under this perspective, the idea of nation is personified in the people that constitute it, as the national language cannot be spoken if not by them. This reflection finds the reasoning that the language is held by the speakers, and belongs to each one and to everyone. As we reflected earlier, it belongs to everyone in the search for unity, and to each one on the extent of its stylistic form.

In this conception, thus, it is conceived to the speakers the role of greatest importance in the construction of a national language. However, the problem remains in considering this speaker as the holder of the language, as the master of his or her thought and speech. In this sense, language is engendered in its interior, which is the place where the dispositions of a *national spirit* are kept. In this reflection, we encounter, mainly, the idealistic character of Vossler's thought, according to the critic of Volochínov (1973), who describes the first misconception of individualistic subjectivism:

9 According to Vossler (1932), those terms were used by the Romantics. The Positivists, on the other hand, denied such expressions because they would not be appropriate for a science. The author use them not as a reference to a mythological being, but as a force. Volochínov (1973) postulates that the orientation of the individualistic subjectivism is connected to the Romanticism, which formed the first philologists, "[...] the first to attempt a radical restructuring of linguistic thought. Their restructuring was based on experience with native language as the medium through which consciousness and ideas are generated." (p. 83) It was beyond their strength, though, to restructure the mode of thinking about language sustained for centuries, as stated by Volochínov. (*op. cit.*)

For individualistic subjectivism, the entire crux of the matter is Just exactly the speech act – the utterance. However, individualistic subjectivism likewise defines this act as something individual and therefore endeavors to explain it in terms of the individual psychic life of the speaker. (p. 82)

This perspective of speech as utterance of a particular order, individual in the sense that it is constituted as a style which is personal and exists in the core of individuals, is criticized by Volochínov (*op. cit.*) in the extent that in a materialist perspective language cannot be conceived out of the scope of a historical and ideological order. Furthermore, for this author, the aesthetic of language is not a matter of individual choice, as it is built along the history.

In addition, another problem in the conception of the individualistic subjectivism is the fact that there is a homogenization of language. The perspective of a national language and a national character erases the fact that a national community is built in a heterogeneous way, and the individuals use the language in diverse ways. The same country, with the same economical system and the same sociopolitical organization offers different conditions of existence for different individuals. This happens because a system as capitalism is characterized by its contradictions. As the values and needs vary in the core of a society, according to the variation of class interests, individuals make use of a same language, but in divergent ways. Therefore, it is not possible to claim the existence of a national style in a heterogeneously constituted society.

Volochínov (1973) describes the principles of Vossler's thought in the following way:

It is completely understandable, then, that for Vossler the basic manifestation, the basic reality, of language should not be language as a ready-made system, in the sense of a body of inherited, immediately usable forms – phonetic, grammatical, and other – but the **individual creative act of speech (Sprache als Rede)**. (1973, p. 51)

In this way, according to Volochínov, what matters, from the perspective of the evolution of the language, is the stylistic concretization and the forms of individual character that concern to the speech act. "(...) *everything that becomes a fact of grammar had once been a fact of style*. This is what Vossler's idea of the *precedence of style over grammar* amounts to." (*op. cit.*, p. 51) (Italics from the author)

In our comprehension, such conception of language is remarkable for linguistic studies. If on one side Vossler's thought refers to language creativity as an act which has its starting point in the interior of the speaker, and this configures an idealistic conception if we understand language under a materialist perspective, on the other side, to recognize a particular *style* which is built in accordance to a *national feeling*, as much as the term *feeling* does not refer to a materialist approach itself, and consider this style *over grammar*, constitutes a highly important reflection. Such reflection opens the way to think a variety of issues, such as: the relations between language and subjectivity; a concept of subjectivity related to national, and, therefore, material aspects; the role of individuals inserted in specific historical and social conditions in enunciation process.

Final considerations

We consider that the reflections around Volochínov's critique on the individualistic subjectivism and the reading of one of its main representatives, Karl Vossler, can lead us

to a wider comprehension of the challenges of the studies of language. Furthermore, it reassures the necessity to work under a materialist perspective of language.

To individualistic subjectivism, the focus of linguistic studies lies in the speech as an act of individual enunciation, as well as in the unity of national language and in the style as aesthetical value. By considering the speech act an act of individual enunciation, this trend “(...) endeavors to explain it in terms of the individual psychic life of the speaker.” (Volochinov, 1973, p. 82) We recognize here the main critique of Volochinov on this trend of thought. He concludes by saying:

In point of fact, the speech act, or, more accurately, its product – the utterance, cannot under any circumstances be considered an individual phenomenon in the precise meaning of the word and cannot be explained in terms of the individual psychological or psychophysiological conditions of the speaker. **The utterance is a social phenomenon.** (op. cit., p. 82)

As we can see, Volochinov builds his thesis starting from the observation of the trends of thought in philosophy of language. Therefore, it is important that any research on his work takes into consideration such process.

Concerning to Vossler’s studies, from the present investigation on *Spirit of Language in Civilization (1932)*, we can state its importance for the studies of language, as it raises issues and debates from a unique perspective. Even though an individualistic approach of the concept of subjectivity can be considered idealistic, we comprehend that in many aspects this author is pioneer and original in his thought. At a time when linguistic studies had major formal concerns, and Saussure’s *Course of General Linguistics* had been published for the first time fifteen years earlier, he raised issues about the speech over a general language and, more than that, each one’s individual speech, highlighting the importance of investigating the relations between language and subjectivity. This thought becomes clear when he, in the beginning of chapter II of his *Spirit of language in civilization (1932, p. 7)*, claims that:

To begin with, there is actually no language, but only speech: my speech, your speech, our speech now and here, to-day and yesterday. But **our** speech is not yet a language, it is at most conversation. And even this would have to be doubted if **my** speech were not heard and understood and answered in some way by someone else. If I were the only one in the whole world who spoke, there would not only be no language, there would not even be speech, not even **my** speech. How can I be sure, how can I know that I am speaking when no one hears me, no one understands, no one answers – no one; therefore not even myself?

With those words, we finish the present reflection, aware that this is a short excerpt in what must be a wide investigation.

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