

PSYCHOLINGUISTIC SURVEY TECHNIQUES AS MEANS OF STUDYING LANGUAGE CONCEPTS

Nowadays anthropocentric approach tends to be dominating in linguistics. That is why scholars get more and more interested in the so to say real living language which obviously functions in real communication and is not actually separated from the instant speaker unlike the so-called “dead language” fixed as if being “embalmed” in lexicographic sources.

When investigating the verbalization specificity of language concepts (namely, SUCCESS-FAILURE, УСПІХ-НЕВДАЧА concepts) in the cognitive consciousness of American English and Ukrainian speakers basing upon the psycholinguistic experiment results the study itself becomes more objective, reliable and authentic. Cognitive consciousness of the speakers via associative verbal reactions obtained in the process of a psycholinguistic survey gets projected straight on to the linguistic consciousness of the respondents representing a particular language community.

These are psychological experiment techniques (namely, the techniques of associative and receptive experiments, semantic scaling, interviewing, ranging, experimental identification of symbols and oth.) that give a possibility to isolate (to distinguish) psychologically real meaning of the key element of the concept under consideration, to study the specificity and peculiarities of functioning of language structures in real communication, the certain aspects of interaction between language units and constructions, patterns in the processes of comprehension, retention and generation of speech utterances, etc. [3: 243].

Psycholinguistic survey makes it possible to single out major and minor cognitive signs of a particular concept for speakers’ consciousness not at the reflexive level (the level of theoretical knowledge), but at the ontological level, the level of being – in real, factual applicable sphere [4: 195]. Generally, psycholinguistic experiment results prove that some concepts (e.g. *TOLERANCE*, *DEMOCRACY*) can be perceived by a certain linguistic community at the reflexive level but are impossible to be moved to the ontological level and are not able to function within every-day life sphere of people, determine their behavior. These very concepts usually prove to demonstrate low consensus (*conformity*, *concurrence*) within respondents’ answers, low level of representativity of the greater part of the cognitive signs of a particular concept.

Conceptual analysis would be incomplete without the data of psycholinguistic experiments, because “concept appears to be strongly

connected with the associative field of a word [1: 359]. Methodology of a psycholinguistic experiment makes it possible to penetrate inside the meaning of the word and to break it up into components which cannot be realized by the native speakers, the so-called verbalized senses and implications.

Associative experiment, for instance, makes it possible for a scholar to “observe” a small section of an “associative component”, the true real “non-verbal meaning”, that is kind of “hidden by the invisible hand”, a well-kept secret and which an ordinary individual sometimes is not able to get to in the process of searching a necessary meaning [3: 244]. The search is suspended earlier and within verbal realization this very “section/segment” of meaning is provided.

Nevertheless, the total product of activity of individual consciousness of native speakers gives a scholar an opportunity to obtain some averaged picture of psychological structure of meaning – a certain verbal model of non-verbal phenomenon of meaning [ibid]. Actualization of semantics of the word provides an opportunity of so to say flashing of the most significant and topical aspect of meaning for the current moment on the “scoreboard of the consciousness”, whereas all the rest that is related to it in one way or another is either taken into consideration or ignored without being realized by means of consciousness [4: 119].

Our perceptions and associations are conditioned by experience, education, language, culture, and, under certain circumstances (including when it comes to representatives of different cultures), the same stimuli can cause different feelings, and different stimuli are the same feelings and associations that arise from respondents through speech and thinking and underlie cognitive organization of their experience [1; 4].

An individual, investing in the concept of success or failure as a construct of a certain content, begins to interpret other phenomena, people, objects, through the prism of this content, which is also directly related to the organization of mental processes, the course of which is carried out in the nervous system of the individual and is determined not least by the way the individual implies, “constructing” those or other future events

The total number of respondents who participated in our psycholinguistic experiment carried out in 2009-2013 makes up 800 speakers – 400 representatives of American English linguistic community (USA) and 400 native Ukrainian speakers (Ukraine) (more on the issue in [2] and oth. sources). The respondents belong to different age, gender and professional groups and were selected by means of simple random sampling of 400 units (people-speakers) with a maximum permissible statistical error of 5%. The sample size of the respondents for both American English and Ukrainian linguistic

communities was calculated by the formula of a non-repetitive random sample [5: 105-111].

The general population of respondents representing American English (USA) and Ukrainian (Ukraine) communicative cultures was formed from the general population of the cities selected for participating in the psycholinguistic experiment that implies the availability of equal opportunities for all the members of the specific population (language community) to enter the group of participants in the experiment.

By the formula of non-repetitive random sample

$$\Delta_x = t \sqrt{\frac{\sigma^2}{n} \left(1 - \frac{n}{N}\right)}$$

(where Δ_x is marginal error of sampling average; σ^2 is average square of variations in the sample; n is the size of the sample population; N is the number of the general population;

$1 - \frac{n}{N}$ is unconsidered part of the general population; t is the coefficient of confidence, which depends on the probability, with which the marginal error margin of the sample is guaranteed [5: 106]. The number of Ukrainian informants with a total population of ~ 46 million people. Taking into account a statistical error of 5% (with a characteristic of 50) is 384 persons. Similarly, the number of American respondents (384 persons) with a total population of the USA - ~ 313 million people. with a maximum permissible error of 5% [5: 106-111].

For ease of calculating the results of the psycholinguistic experiment carried out the number of 384 was rounded to 400, which allows a statistical error of 5%.

In the survey conducted with the involvement of the representatives of the American English linguistic community, whose number is 400 people, all the participants are citizens of the United States of America, among them – 162 (40,5%) male respondents and 238 (59,5%) female respondents (Fig. 2.1). Among the participants there are 178 people aged 18 - 25 y.o. (44,5%); 144 people aged 26 - 45 y.o. (36%) and 78 aged 46 and above (19,5%) (Fig. 2.3). English is a mother tongue.

The respondents were students (16,8%), teachers (8,7%), medical workers (11,8%), service sector (10,2%), officials (7,2%), lawyers (9,7%), entrepreneurs (11,5%), managers (12%), archaeologists (2,8%), the unemployed (9,7%) and oth. (table 1) from the US cities of Albany (the state of New York), Philadelphia (the state of Pennsylvania), Burlington (the state of Vermont), Boston (the state of Massachusetts). The psycholinguistic survey was conducted in an individual form and lasted for 2009-2013.

The total number of verbal reactions obtained on calculating the survey data is 1969 (100%) units that actualize verbally SUCCESS concept and 1919 (100%) verbal reactions that actualize FAILURE concept in American language consciousness.

Ukrainian respondents, whose number is 400 people as well all are the citizens of Ukraine, among them 180 (45%) male participants and 220 (55%) female participants (Fig. 2.2). The distribution of the respondents by age groups is the following: 190 people aged 18 - 25 y.o. (47,5%); 104 people aged 26 - 45 y.o. (26%) and 106 people aged 46 and above (26,5%) (Fig. 2.4). Ukrainian is a mother tongue.

The informants were students (13,5%), teachers (10,2%), medical workers (9%), service sector (6,8%), engineers (5%), librarians (4,8%), managers (8,2%), lawyers (11,8%), entrepreneurs (10,3%) and officials (10,7%) (Table 1) from the Ukrainian cities of Kyiv, Kirovohrad, Vinnytsia and Zaporizhzhya. Likewise, the psycholinguistic survey was conducted in an individual form and lasted for 2009-2013. As a result of processing the survey data we obtained 1908 / 100% verbal reactions that actualize УСПИХ concept and 1905 / 100% speech reactions that represent НЕВДАЧА concept in Ukrainian national language consciousness.

Further research can be dedicated to the methodology of applying psycholinguistic survey techniques with our 800 American and Ukrainian respondents involved aiming at disclosure of the specificity of conceptualizing the phenomena of success and failure by the representatives of American English and Ukrainian language communities.

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THE EVOLUTION OF CONCEPTUAL METAPHOR IN THE LIGHT OF RECENT RESEARCH ANALYSIS

The pioneers of cognitive linguistics George Lakoff and Mark Johnsen claimed that human conceptual system is fundamentally metaphorical in nature in terms of both thoughts and actions. The scientists stated that concepts govern our thoughts and everyday functioning, as well as structure perception of the world and relation to it and thus define people's everyday reality. It is important to take into account that human conceptual system is only partially conscious and one of the ways to examine one's system is to study the language. George Lakoff and Mark Johnsen, in their fundamental work "Metaphors we live by", proved that language is an important source of evidence for the conceptual system research and human conceptual system is largely metaphorical [1].

According to Michiel Leezenberg, the research paradigm of cognitive linguistics has seen tremendous growth over the past three decades. Characteristic of this paradigm is a fruitful interdisciplinary cooperation characterized by a remarkable one-sidedness to this interdisciplinary blossoming. Michiel Leezenberg sees little if any substantial exchange or collaboration between cognitive linguistics and the social sciences, which is all the more surprising as at first metaphor appeared to become the master trope of symbolic and cognitive anthropology [2]. Culture and communication are mutually effected and language is the means and medium of their coexistence. It describes and fixes a wide range of communication processes and possible problems. The social context of the modern global world consists of individuals of different ethnic, religious, social and educational background. Myron W. Lustig and Jolene Koester emphasize that cultural differences and intercultural communication are among the central aspects of modern life. It is also noted that there are forces which encourage and discourage understanding and accommodation among people who differ from one another [1: 1].