

## **STUDY OF THE LANGUAGE CONSCIOUSNESS OF UKRAINIANS BY THE METHOD OF FREE ASSOCIATIVE EXPERIMENT**

**Introduction.** The assumption that we become conscious in language is erroneous: verbal communication is only an intermediary. The conscious experience of verbal communication is a sensory phenomenon. We think through sensory images. This natural way of thinking, is a very refined and accurate method of translating thought into consciousness [5].

In this context, it is particularly valuable to study associations as the key to accessing to people's consciousness and thoughts. The associations reflect some significant relations between objects and concepts of the real world. In free associative experiments, the time of response is important, the reaction should be fast (a few seconds). We can assume that the associative reaction is closest to what we really think.

We refer to *free association*, a task that requires participants to produce the first word to come to mind that is related in a specified way to a presented cue. This task is used in everyday activities as a means for "collecting thoughts." The same advantage is apparent when attempting to find information on the Internet or just the right word in writing and speech [5].

In this article, we will try to find answers to the questions: how information as a concept is reflected in the language consciousness of Ukrainians. Let's trace the dynamics of changes lasting 10 years. Has the core of associative meaning of information changed? How information forms the language consciousness of Ukrainian society. Comparing the two associative fields also gives us the opportunity to track how the method of conducting an experiment affects the associative behavior of respondents.

**Theory.** Psycholinguistic data in the form of human word association contain many possible kinds of lexical relations. Psycholinguistic data refers to the obtained associative fields as a result of a free associative experiment, where the associative field is a set of reactions to each stimulus word. In this study, the word-stimulus is INFORMATION. Whereas some can be conveniently defined by linguistic means, such as paradigmatic relations and some syntagmatic relations, some are personal associations [2]. Reactions in the associative field can form *paradigmatic* connections (they belong to the same grammatical class as the stimulus, if necessary, act as a kind of substitute for the stimulus) and *syntagmatic* (they form phrases with the word-stimulus). Such lexical relations as paradigmatic and syntagmatic are a part of denotative meaning (strict dictionary meaning of a word), when reactions with evaluative content are connotative meaning (emotional and imaginative association). In the structure of the associative field, we distinguish the core (the most frequent reactions) and the periphery (reactions with a lower frequency in the associative field). Indeed, in core high-frequency words there are "strong" associations. They reveal a language consciousness. This form of consciousness is a social phenomenon, since the acquisition of language is the result of exclusively social contacts [3, pp. 33, 39], and

can be defined a set of vital judgments and ideas related to language in society or any social group [1, p. 26]. Strong or core associations as a rule are understandable to others, carrying important content for a particular social group. While personal reactions are based on a certain individual experience, they are usually located on the periphery of the associative field and have low repeatability.

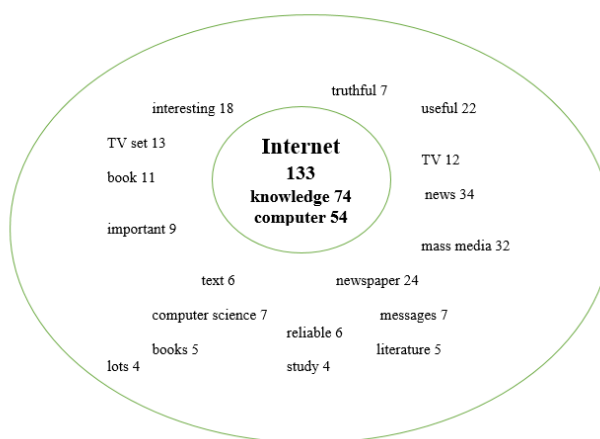
Collective consciousness influence specific language decisions and works in the following way. Actual consciousness refers to what a person is able to realize at the moment. Potential (latent) consciousness is considered as a structure that allows you to reproduce knowledge, thoughts, and relationships. Usually, a person focuses on a small piece of their knowledge. However, each segment of it can be moved from potential consciousness into a collective consciousness [7].

It is important to note that core of speech consciousness is not knowledge as such, but an emotional and value element [6]. Language consciousness is the highest part of the hierarchy in a special mental center, the so-called inner language of a person. In the associative field, which is formed by reactions to the word-stimulus, there is an element of emotional evaluation, most often it is located on the periphery, expressed by low-frequency reactions. Using the examples of two associative fields, we can see which concepts have been activated, and which on the contrary, which emotional element prevails in the attitude to the word-stimulus – positive or negative.

**Data and Methods.** It should be emphasized that a student audience is most often chosen for linguistic experiments. It is believed that by the age of 25, the language consciousness of an individual is formed, and this gives reason to assert that this is how these individuals will think similarly over the next decades. This paper uses data stemming from two experiments conducted in 2011 and 2021, respectively the first experiment involved 732 students. We conducted the 2011 experiment under the controlled conditions with paper questionnaires, meaning that the experimenter was in the classroom with the interviewees during the study. Respondents received clear instructions for completing the task. The word-stimulus was read out by the experimenter in a fixed period of time, so the interviewee should quickly write a reaction. While the second experiment (2021) was proposed as an electronic questionnaire and we do not know how long the subject thought about this or that word. In both cases, outside influence is still unavoidable, because the respondent is always exposed to various influences – the weather, mood, conditions in which the experiment is conducted, and many others. However, for our analysis, the data obtained in both cases are relevant.

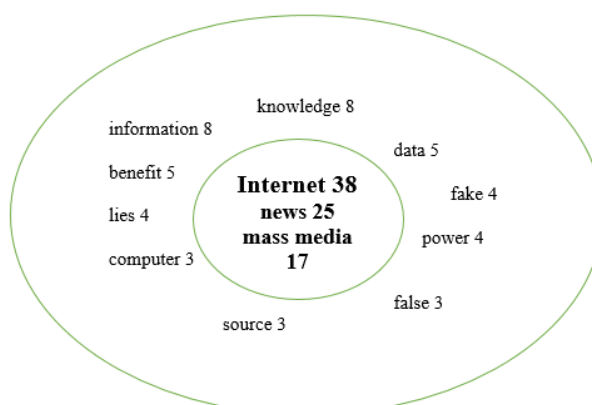
In the first experiment (2011) the study was conducted in different cities of Ukraine in university classrooms, covering the north, center, east, west and south of the country. The task of the survey was writing down the first word that came to mind after listening to (in the experiment in 2011) or reading (in the second experiment in 2021) stimulus word. Of course, here we can study the impact on the response of different ways of presenting words-stimuli. How does this affect the response to the stimulus word? Which way of perceiving a stimulus word is more complex and whether the response to the stimulus word changes. We can answer these questions by conducting identical experiments presented orally (listening to the stimulus word) and in writing (reading the stimulus word on a paper or electronic questionnaire). This may be the basis for further research. In any case, for us, the obtained material is reliable in any form of conducting an experiment.

Figure 1. The core and periphery of the most frequent reactions in associative field (2011)



From the associative field of 2021, we can see how the events that occur are reflected in the associative field: *about the incidence; quarantine; about Covid; everyone will die; about the number of detected cases over the past day; vitamins; zinc; about the suspension of the disease; in China they have already been ill, and in Ukraine everything is just beginning.*

Figure 2. The core and periphery of the most frequent reactions in associative field (2021)



Incentive information is a very voluminous and multi-valued concept in the Ukrainian consciousness is formed with the help of the media, and most of all through the Internet. Information is no longer *knowledge*, and access to it is no longer as important as a *computer*. Compared to 2011 (connotations: *true* 7; *reliable* 6; *many* 2, *new* 4; *benefit* 2, *positive*, *good*, *false* 2, *necessary*, *expensive*, *well-known*, *difficult*, *important* 9). There are more negative reactions in 2021 (*fake* 4, *lie* 4, *insufficient* 2, *incorrect* 2, *false* 3, *unreliable* 2, *manipulation* 2, *not enough*, *confusing*, *not always true*, *hidden*, *depressing*).

**Results.** A comparative study showed that the core remained unchanged (the most frequent reaction in both associative fields is the *Internet*). But the second most frequent reaction is the *news*, which can potentially become core reaction in future. The associative field shows actual concepts associated with a word stimulus and actual language consciousness.

Conducting a study after a certain period of time can show the dynamics of the peripheral part of the associative field can move to the core and vice versa. We can say that in this way the potential language consciousness. The reaction *computer*, which was the third most frequent reaction in 2011 (7% of all reactions), accounts for only

1% of repetitions in 2021. Information is already less identified with knowledge (the frequency of the *knowledge* reaction has decreased from 10% to 3%), and more with News (the frequency of the *news* reaction has increased from 5% to 8%).

The results of both experiments showed that information is most often associated with the Internet as a source of access to it. The *Internet* was the most repeated response –18% of all responses from other associative field reactions in 2011 and 12% in 2021.

The low repeatability of the core reaction (only 18% and 12% of all reactions in two associative field) may indicate the absence of stereotypical thinking in Ukrainian society.

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