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Ассоциативное поле концепта ЗДОРОВЬЕ в языковом сознании студентов в период пандемии

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Аннотация. Цель исследования - изучить специфику ассоциативного поля концепта ЗДОРОВЬЕ в языковом сознании студентов в лингвокогнитивном аспекте. Научная новизна исследования заключается в применении метода свободного ассоциативного эксперимента для выявления особенностей репрезентации данного концепта в восприятии студентов, живущих в эпоху пандемии, посредством анализа реакций на слово-стимул ЗДОРОВЬЕ и определения доминант ассоциативного поля в их языковой картине мира. В результате исследования проведено качественное и количественное описание слов-реакций, построено ассоциативное поле концепта ЗДОРОВЬЕ, выявлена специфика объективации его ядерных и периферийных зон, доказано, что концепт ЗДОРОВЬЕ занимает важное место в языковом сознании студентов и отражает события настоящего времени.

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Association Field of the HEALTH Concept in the Language Consciousness of Students during the Pandemic

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Abstract. The paper aims at studying the specifics of the association field of the HEALTH concept in the language consciousness of students in the linguo-cognitive aspect. Scientific novelty of the research lies in the application of a free association experiment method to identify the features of this concept representation in the perception of students living in the era of the pandemic by analyzing reactions to the word-stimulus HEALTH and determining the dominants of the association field in their linguistic worldview. As a result of the research, a qualitative and quantitative description of reaction words has been carried out, the association field of the HEALTH concept has been constructed, the specifics of objectification of its nuclear and peripheral zones has been revealed. It has been proved that the HEALTH concept is of great importance in the linguistic consciousness of students and reflects the events of the present time.

Introduction

Within the framework of modern linguistics, the study of the concept is becoming more relevant, as it serves to explain the units of mental and psychological resources of our consciousness and the information structure that reflects the knowledge and experience of a person, it is a holistic formation that can replenish, change and reflect human experience (Карасик, 2009; Карасик, Слышкин, 2001; Кубрякова, 1996).

The relevance of the research is due to the need to study the HEALTH concept in the perception of students during the global pandemic of the new COVID-19 virus, in a linguo-cognitive aspect, since this concept is associated with the basic characteristics of human life. According to scientists, it is a universal value concept that takes a central place in the human worldview (Атлас здоровья..., 2004; Грехнева, 2020; Пенягина, 2020). V. G. Turkina, O. V. Verbina (Туркина, Вербина, 2019) claim that “health is the most important value of the civilizational and cultural development of human society, forming a way of life, a style of behavior, cultural and moral values, contributing to the optimal functioning of all subsystems of human culture – bodily, mental, social, political, etc.” (p. 23-24). The analysis of the obtained associations will make it possible to compose the association field of the HEALTH concept and determine the dominants represented in the linguistic consciousness of students of the XXI century; to identify the place that this concept occupies in their linguistic worldview.

To achieve the research goal, it is necessary to solve the following tasks: firstly, to carry out qualitative and quantitative processing of the results of a free association experiment, to build an association field of the HEALTH concept, to identify the specifics of its nuclear and peripheral zones; secondly, to describe the dominant association field; thirdly, to analyze the reaction words included in the theme groups which reflect the representation of the HEALTH concept in the linguistic consciousness of students.

The object of research in this paper is the HEALTH concept. The subject of research is the linguistic means of objectification of the HEALTH concept.

The following research methods are used to describe the HEALTH concept: analysis of scientific literature, definitional interpretation of semantics, free associative experiment, methods of statistical data processing, as well as such general scientific methods as observation, description, analysis and synthesis.

The theoretical background of the research were the scientific works of V. I. Karasik (Карасик, 2009), V. I. Karasik, G. G. Slyshkin (Карасик, Слышкин, 2001), E. S. Kubryakova (Кубрякова, 1996), Yu. S. Stepanov (Степанов, 1997), which are devoted to the description of the concept as a unit of cognitive linguistics and cultural linguistics. In addition, the studies of modern scientists were taken into account: B. A. Berberov (Берберов, 2020); P. V. Bundze, R. D. Dibner (Бундзе, Дибнер, 1994); L. V. Grekhneva (Грехнева, 2020), E. B. Penuyagina (Пенягина, 2020), M. E. Chizhova (Чижова, 2020), who consider the HEALTH concept as a universal value concept that has a central place in the human worldview. At the same time, A. A. Kuzmina (Кузьмина, 2017) and M. A. Hashkhanyan, G. D. Sknar, S. P. Korneychuk (Хашхаян, Скар, Корнейчук, 2019) describe the HEALTH concept in a comparative aspect in various national linguistic worldviews. There are also the works of N. V. Aniskina (Анискина, 2014) in the field of sociolinguistics, V. G. Turkina, O. V. Verbina (Туркина, Вербина, 2019) in the field of cultural studies and philosophy emphasizing that the HEALTH concept has a multidisciplinary basis. An important aspect of the study was the application of the method of a free association experiment, which helped to construct the association field of the HEALTH concept in the linguistic consciousness of modern students. It became possible thanks to the works by V. E. Goldin and his colleagues (Гольдин, Сдобнова, Мартьянов, 2011), I. V. Grigorieva, A. B. Tumanova (Григорьева, Туманова, 2019), N. V. Ufimtseva (Уфимцева, 1996), which describe the essence and methodology of conducting a free association experiment.

The practical significance of the study lies in the possibility of applying its results in cognitive linguistics, cultural linguistics, psycholinguistics, sociolinguistics and medicine.

Results and Discussion

The term “concept” is defined by researchers in different ways. So, according to E. S. Kubryakova (Кубрякова, 1996), the concept serves to explain the units of mental and psychological resources of our consciousness and the information structure that reflects the knowledge and experience of a person. V. I. Karasik, G. G. Slyshkin (Карасик, Слышкин, 2001) emphasize that the concept should combine the results of scientific research in the spheres of consciousness, culture and language. Yu. S. Stepanov (Степанов, 1997) interprets the concept as a culture clot in the human mind. Thus, the existing definitions of the term “concept” complement each other, but there is no doubt that the concept is a unit of knowledge of the world, a mental category. In this study, the term “concept” is understood as a complex mental formation, representing a set of knowledge and ideas about a fragment of the world, an object or a phenomenon of reality, possessing axiological characteristics for a specific linguistic personality and collective consciousness as a whole, i.e. reflecting the national and sociocultural specifics of the carrier’s worldview language (Антология концептов, 2005; Карасик, 2009).

In lexicographic sources, the word “health” is interpreted as the proper functioning of the body, the physical and mental well-being of a person, as well as a warm atmosphere in society (Кузнецов, 2001, p. 361). Before the XX century, health was understood merely as the fact of the absence of diseases, but in the second half of the XX century – the early XXI century, approaches to the interpretation of health have significantly expanded. For example, according to P. V. Bundze, R. D. Dibner (Бундзе, Дибнер, 1994, p. 7), health is a psychophysical state of a person, which is marked by the absence of pathological changes and a functional backup sufficient for full-fledged biosocial adaptation and preservation of physical and mental performance in the natural environment. The academician V. P. Kaznacheev (Казначеев, 1997) considers health in the context of the longest possible life with the preservation of active working capacity based on the optimal and harmonious interaction of mental and physiological functions of the human body. According to the definition of the World Health Organization, the concept of health reflects the current level of a person’s state, their physical, spiritual and social well-being and comfort (Атлас здоровья..., 2004). Thus, almost all definitions of health highlight “the absence of illness, disease”, “proper functioning of the body”, “the natural and pristine state of the body”, “complete physical, mental, social well-being”.

Empiric data and research methodology. In this study, the main methods of research are the method of statistical processing of data and the method of free association experiment, the potential of which has not yet been fully studied. A. A. Ufimtseva (Уфимцева, 1996) justly notes that the associations method makes it possible to “keep track of popular mentality, that is, perception and assessment of the world at a certain historical moment by a certain close majority of society members, formed from individual perception” (p. 140). In our view, “an association experiment involving a large number of informants, helps to identify associations typical of a particular group of people” (Ахматьянова, Сальникова, 2018, p. 38).

Experimental research. The paper presents the study of the association field of the HEALTH concept in the language consciousness of students based on the free association experiment data, the aim of which is to identify through the analysis of reactions (hereinafter – R) to the word-stimulus (hereinafter – S) HEALTH the specifics of their attitude to this phenomenon at present and the specification of dominants in their linguistic worldview. The research material was the results of a free association experiment held in March 2021 with the informants – students of the Faculty of Philology and Intercultural Communications, Pedagogics, Biology and Chemistry of the Birk branch of the Bashkir State University (Birk, Republic of Bashkortostan, Russia). In total, 100 respondents were

involved in the experiment. To reach the objective and obtain reliable results we interviewed the informants of one age group from 18 to 22 years old.

We put forward the following research hypothesis: the set of the obtained associations will make it possible to draw up an association field of the HEALTH concept and determine the dominants represented in the language consciousness of XXI century students; at the same time, we believe that the concept under analysis has an important place in their linguistic worldview.

The free association experiment was carried out in the following way: each informant was offered a sheet of paper on which the word-S HEALTH was printed. This experiment assumes the answer-R to the proposed word-S by any word that came to mind. The instruction was given orally: "Write down as many words related to S-HEALTH as possible". The time of the experiment was taken into account and limited. The given time to record the answers by the informants was 5 minutes.

After conducting the experiment, the quantitative and qualitative data processing was carried out. We received 570 responses to the word-S HEALTH from the informants of the free association experiment, which amounted to 15 theme groups. The data are presented in Table 1. It should be noted that it is quite difficult to differentiate the theme groups that form the association field of the HEALTH concept, since in many cases there is a connection between the answers-R, for example, "Regular (healthy) lifestyle" and "Healthy nutrition", "Medicine and health" and "Physical fitness", etc. Thus, all the 15 theme groups we have identified are closely related.

Table 1. The results of the free association experiment

№	Theme Groups	Degree of incidence
		R (%)
		1-5 year students
1	Regular (healthy) lifestyle	65
2	Medicine and health	40
3	Emotional (mental, spiritual) health	39
4	Healthy nutrition	37
5	Physical fitness	36
6	External manifestation of health	21
7	Mental health	18
8	Health assessment	16
9	Social well-being	12
10	Environment and health	7
11	Professions, occupation	4
12	Negative factors affecting health	3
13	Academic subjects	2
14	Popular health TV shows	2
15	Health proverbs	2

We will consider some R-answers in each theme group in more detail.

The biggest by the number of R-answers is the theme group "Healthy lifestyle", which constitutes 65% of the total number of all R. It includes the following words and phrases: *sports* (31), *healthy lifestyle* (19), *physical education* (11), *healthy sleep* (6), *sleep* (6), *fitness* (4), *running* (4), *jogging* (1), *active lifestyle* (2), *exercise* (2), *gymnastics* (2), *breathing* (2), *good life* (2), *no bad habits* (2), *walking* (2), *outdoor recreation* (2), *outdoor walks* (1), *moving* (1), *healthy body* (1), *activity* (1), *active lifestyle* (1), *full sleep* (1), *good sleep* (1), *lifestyle* (1), *cleanliness* (1), *bicycle* (1), *morning run* (1), *morning exercises* (1), *hardening* (1). As we can see by the R-answers, the respondents attach great importance to sports, physical education, fitness, etc., since they believe that physical activity, a healthy lifestyle and good sleep contribute to the improvement of human health. This group is dominated by substantive names.

The second biggest by the number of R-answers is the theme group "Medicine and health", accounting for 40% of all Rs, which, in our opinion, is not accidental: the group includes names associated with the pandemic. It includes words and phrases such as *hospital* (18), *healthy* (11), *doctor* (10), *quarantine* (7), *illness* (6), *mask* (6), *treatment* (6), *medicine* (5), *massage* (5), *antiseptic* (4), *to wash hands* (4), *medicine* (4), *tablets* (4), *vaccination* (4), *vaccine* (3), *injections* (3), *to clean hands* (3), *prevention* (3), *medical examination* (3), *antibodies and antigens* (3), *pain* (3), *patient* (2), *organism* (2), *epidemic* (2), *doctor* (2), *IV line* (2), *thermometer* (2), *inoculation* (2), *hemoglobin level* (2), *ambulance* (2), *disease clearance* (2), *genetics* (1), *pharmacy* (1), *tests* (1), *clinic* (1), *examination* (1), *patient's condition* (1), *medical book* (1), *observation ward* (1), *COVID hospital* (1), *коронавирусуць – to suffer from coronavirus* (1), *диванные вирусологи – "couch" virologists* (1). Among the responses given by the respondents there are neologisms associated with the pandemic, for example: *коронавирусуць – to suffer from coronavirus*: 1) be on self-isolation; 2) suffer from coronavirus infection; *диванные вирусологи – "couch" virologists* – people who have nothing to do with the study of viruses and medicine, but who confidently give out information about the new virus (common in social networks), as well as words that have been actively used by native speakers recently (*mask*, *vaccination*, *antiseptic*, *wash hands*, etc.).

The theme group "Emotional (mental, spiritual) health" is the next most frequent (39%). It includes the following Rs: *happiness* (17), *calm* (6), *joy* (4), *good mood* (3), *mental health* (2), *healthy nervous system* (2), *happy and active life* (2), *love* (1), *mood* (1), *state of mind* (1), *moral state* (1), *mental and emotional health* (1), *healthy emotional state* (1), *absence of depression* (1). The adjectival and nominal lexical units constitute this group.

Such words and expressions as *healthy nutrition* (13), *vitamins* (9), *diet* (8), *healthy food* (7), *vegetables* (5), *fruit* (4), *food* (2), *wholesome food* (1), *food* (1) belong to the theme group “Healthy nutrition” (37%). Thus, the respondents’ answers indicate that they attach great importance to proper and nutritious dieting, since they consider it the key to good health.

The theme group “Physical fitness” makes up 36% of the total number of Rs. The analyzed group is represented by the following words and phrases: *life* (12), *immunity* (6), *well-being* (6), *energy* (5), *longevity* (4), *youth* (4), *vigor* (2), *good life* (2), *healthy body* (2), *lack of chronic diseases* (1), *vitality* (1), *efficiency* (1), *pain-free* (1), *health* (1), *mental health* (1), *age* (1), *stamina* (1), *good health* (1), *upstanding children* (1), *strong immunity* (1), *long life* (1), *stress free* (1). The respondents’ answers demonstrate the importance of immunity, vitality, energy, while, in their opinion, an important indicator of physical health is a person’s age (*longevity*, *youth*).

The theme group “External manifestation of health” (21%) is constituted by the words *beauty* (12), *strength* (6), *clear skin* (4), *shapely body* (4), *body* (2), *neatness* (1), *well-groomed appearance* (1), *healthy gums* (1). According to the respondents’ choice of Rs, one can judge the state of a person’s health by their appearance.

The theme group “Mental health” (18%) includes such nouns as *harmony* (6), *sound mind* (4), *spirit* (4), *mental health* (2), *inspiration* (1), *pacification* (1), *hope* (1). The respondents’ replies show that harmonious and peaceful coexistence with themselves and the world around them is the priority for them. Abstract nouns predominate in this group.

The smallest in the number of Rs are the theme groups “Negative factors affecting health” (3%): *alcohol* (1), *cigarettes* (1), *hard work* (1); “Academic subjects” (2%): *genetics* (1), *psychology* (1); “Popular health TV shows” (2%): *Elena Malysheva* (2); “Health proverbs” (2%): *A sound mind in a sound body* (1), *Good health is above wealth* (1), *Prevention is better than cure* (1).

Conclusion

Thus, as a result of the study, we come to the following findings:

Firstly, based on the responses received from the respondents to the word-S HEALTH, an association field was constructed, in which the nuclear R is the word *sport* (31); the pre-nuclear zone is constituted by the Rs *healthy lifestyle* (19), *hospital* (18), *happiness* (17); the nearest periphery is made up of the Rs *good* (14), *regular* (12), *proper nutrition* (13), *life* (12), *physical education* (11), etc.; the distant periphery is represented by the Rs: *vitamins* (9), *nutrition* (8), *quarantine* (7), *illness* (6), *mask* (6), *massage* (5), *joy* (4) and others; the extreme periphery includes various associations that rate from 1 to 3 times – this is *to clean hands* (3), *prevention* (3), *exercise* (2), *healthy food* (1) etc.

Secondly, the dominant factors of the association field of the HEALTH concept are the theme groups “Healthy lifestyle”, “Medicine and health”, “Emotional (mental, spiritual) health”. The most diverse and numerous are the theme groups “Medicine and health” (146 R); “Healthy lifestyle” (111 R); “Health assessment” (65 R); “Healthy nutrition” (58 R); “Physical fitness” (56 R). It proves that the respondents attribute physical and emotional well-being to the main components of health. In their opinion, it is important to have a healthy lifestyle, involving sports, proper nutrition. A positive assessment of health is presented in their associative field. However, the reference to the theme group “Medicine and health” emphasizes the importance of an early visit to a doctor in medical institutions, as well as reflects the attitude of respondents to the current epidemiological situation.

Thirdly, as for part-of-speech affiliation, substantive vocabulary prevails in all theme groups, with abstract nouns occasionally used (*well-being*, *harmony*, etc.); adjectives are represented to a lesser extent (*clean*, *fresh*, *heavy*, etc.), verbs are quite rare (*process*, *wash*, *clean*). It should be noted that derivatives are observed between linguistic units in some theme groups (for example, *боль – больной – болезнь – больница – безболезненный / pain – painful – illness – hospital – painless*; *чистый – чистота / clean – cleanliness*; *красивый – красота / beautiful – beauty*) as well as antonymic relationships (*здоровый – больной / healthy – sick*). The composition of the theme groups is primarily neutral (interstitial) vocabulary, however, there is also special (terminology) vocabulary (for example, *immunity*, *genetics*, *antibodies*, *antigens*, etc.). At the same time, in the students’ responses there are neologisms associated with the pandemic (*observation ward*, *COVID hospital*, *коронавирусность – to suffer from coronavirus*, *диванные вирусологи – “couch” virologists*). Predominantly words with a positive assessment are included in the association field of the HEALTH concept by the respondents of the experiment, which, in our opinion, is natural due to their age and life experience. In this regard, it is also interesting to highlight the collocational restrictions of the most frequently used lexical units – Rs, for example: *healthy* (*sleep*, *mindset*, *food*, *nutrition*, *organism*, *body*, *way of life*); *good* (*sleep*, *mood*, *mind*, *life*), etc. The respondents’ data show the emotional component of the students’ attitude to health, its concept-forming significance. It should be noted that the students are aware of Russian health proverbs and sayings, which also contain a positive connotation.

Thus, the results of the experiment indicate the significance of this concept for respondents, the importance of maintaining health. Students consider health to be an integral system of the most important characteristics and qualities of a personality, which guarantees optimal and fulfilling life activity, reproductive performance and diversified development; at the same time, it acts as a model of purposeful and harmonious communication of an individual with society and the surrounding world as a whole. The HEALTH concept is a versatile phenomenon that represents in their minds ideas about the physical, emotional, mental state of the body. Various theme groups of vocabulary of a neutral and evaluation nature indicate the complexity and multidimensional nature of this phenomenon.

We see prospects for further research of the problem in the study of the association field of the HEALTH concept in a comparative aspect (based on the analysis of reactions of different age, gender, social groups; as well as by referring to the data of associative dictionaries), in the analysis of the morphemic and word-formation structure of names that arose or were updated during the pandemic of a new coronavirus infection.

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