

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.18454/RULB.2022.35.4>

## ASSOCIATIONS AS REFLECTIONS OF AN INDIVIDUAL'S CONSCIOUSNESS

Research article

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### Abstract

This article is an overview of the results of the associative experiment in revealing some specific linguocultural peculiarities of a notion “request” in the consciousness of the representatives of the Russian and the English linguocultures.

For this purpose, a free associative experiment among Russian and American students was carried out. The results of the experiment demonstrated that the Russian respondents have a different image of “request” in comparison with the one of the American respondents. The methodology described in the article allows to unveil the inner contents of the notion “request” and the peculiarities of individual assessment of a request in the consciousness of native speakers.

**Keywords:** associative experiment, consciousness, linguoculture.

## АССОЦИАЦИИ КАК ОТРАЖЕНИЕ СОЗНАНИЯ ИНДИВИДА

Научная статья

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### Аннотация

В статье рассматриваются результаты ассоциативного эксперимента, позволяющие выявить специфические лингвокультурные особенности понятия «просьба» в сознании представителей русской и английской лингвокультур.

С этой целью был проведен свободный ассоциативный эксперимент среди русских и американских студентов. Результаты эксперимента показали, что образ просьбы носителей русского языка во многом отличается от образа просьбы носителей английского языка. Методология, описанная в статье, позволяет раскрыть внутреннее содержание понятия «просьбы» и особенности индивидуального восприятия просьбы в сознании представителей разных культур.

**Ключевые слова:** ассоциативный эксперимент, сознание, лингвокультура.

### Introduction

Our consciousness is culturally determined and is reflected in language. A person's language knowledge is formed on the basis of his social community, experience, personal emotions and relations. A.A. Leontiev admitted that the meaning of a word being part of language consciousness comprises social and individual experience, knowledge about the world and, besides, it is the form of representing knowledge in a person's consciousness [3]. According to A.A. Zalevskaya, in the consciousness of a native speaker there are pieces of knowledge which can't be explained, but they are used in speech “here and now” [1]. Associations are the reflections of knowledge that stands behind a word. A.A. Zalevskaya believed that “a person's memory is a storage of associations” [1, P. 54]. N.V. Ufimtseva considered that associative fields which researchers get after analyzing words-stimuli represent a mixture of fragments of a native speaker's verbal memory and his ideas about the world reflected in culture, his motives, assessments and cultural stereotypes [9, P. 140]. She also believes that “an associative experiment allows to make the individual consciousness available for the analysis, because as a rule it is hidden from an external observer ...” [10, P. 242]. The principle of association helps to put together objects which do not relate to one another at first sight. N.S. Kuschenko admits that association is a certain border between our conscious mind and our unconscious mind, a special area of transfer from one process to another one [2]. In our recent researches we stressed the importance of the socio-cultural and personal features of the word functioning in the individual consciousness [4], [5], [6].

### Methods and principles

Thus, we suggested that associative experiment may clear up the peculiarities of the notion “request” in Russian and American linguocultures. The experiment may reveal the image of the notion, its hidden ties and meanings existing in the consciousness of some representatives of Russian and American linguocultures. It will be possible to define some peculiar features of the mentality of Russian and American respondents in the course of the experiment. This method also helps to reveal the peculiarities of the individual apprehension of a request in native speakers' consciousness.

50 Russian students and 50 American students took part in our experiment. The respondents were about 20 years old. The respondents were to write down the first words coming to mind on the word-stimulus *request*. The results of the experiment were classified according to the most significant semantic features which can be distinguished in the structure of associations and according to the sense bearing feature. The classification of E.A. Tanygina formed the basis of our classification [8]. However, our classification was extended taking into consideration the received reactions. The correlation of the reactions is demonstrated in the table (see table 1).

Table 1 - The correlation of the Russian and American respondents' reactions

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.18454/RULB.2022.35.4.1>

Group Features	Russian respondents' reactions (188 reactions)	American respondents' reactions (109 reactions)
1. Descriptive associations	<i>Help (30), favour (6), a piece of service (5), necessity (2), advice (2), on a gratis basis (2), wish (2), complaint (2), personal, little help, offer, demand, strong, responsibility, patience, serious, forgiveness, refusal, exchange, cooperation - 63 reactions</i>	<i>Need/need help (10), favour (9), help (5), permission (5), demand (3), offer (2), command, information, assistance, plea, task - 39 reactions</i>
2. Emotive and evaluating associations with a negative connotation	<i>Need/large need (6), plea (4), unachievable (4), helplessness (3), problem (3), begging (2), humiliation (2), despair (2), embarrassment, hopelessness, unpleasant, poverty, difficult situation, weakness, almsgiving, excitement - 35 reactions</i>	<i>Irritating - 2 reactions</i>
3. Operational reactions	<i>Ask (12), help (5), beg (4), do (4), give a helping hand (2), reject (2), trust, lend, give, hope, use, wait, find out, give ear - 37 reactions</i>	<i>Ask (44), want (11), desire (3), inquire (2), beg, get, plead, implore, accept, wonder, seek - 67 reactions</i>
4. Emotive and evaluating associations with a positive connotation	<i>Friendly/friendship (8), kind/kindness/good-tempered (7), tenderness (5), trust (4), polite/politeness (4), mutual assistance (4), respect (3), pleasant (3), support (2), hope (2), normal, dignity, gratuitousness, exchange, responsibility, accept, understanding, mercy, agreement, important, rescue - 53 reactions</i>	<i>Friendliness - 1 reaction</i>

## Results

If we refer to the Russian associative dictionary under the editorial staff of Y. Karaulov, G. Cherkasova, N. Ufimtseva [7] we will see that the word *help* is also the core of the associative field. The periphery of the associative field is introduced with the words *plea, large, huge* in the dictionary article. We can also see the lexical unit *plea* in the answers of the Russian respondents in the group of emotive and evaluating associations with a negative connotation. It should be mentioned that this group of associations (as well as in our experiment) is widely described with the help of various reactions such as *humiliatingly, humiliation, plea, unachievable, silly, grievance*. Operational reactions with a negative connotation can also be included in this group, for example *not to disturb, not to interfere, reject, not to make noise*. These data proves that a request is considered by Russian people of any age as a forced and unpleasant measure causing negative emotions.

The group features correlation of the Russian respondents' reactions and the American respondents' reactions is the same. The quantitative and the qualitative indexes differ, though. The whole amount of the American respondents' reactions is much less than that of the Russian respondents' ones. In the group of the Russian respondents we can see a wide variety of defining the meaning of a request and this is demonstrated in each group of the associations.

Concerning the group with the descriptive associations, we may say that the American respondents consider a request first of all as *need* in something and *favour* and only after that as *help* and *permission*. As for the Russian respondents, the core of the associative field is concentrated on the lexical unit *help* and the periphery of the associative field begins with the words *favour* and *a piece of service*.

The core of the associative field of the emotive and evaluating associations with a negative connotation in the group of the Russian respondents is focused on the lexical units *need, plea, unachievable*. These lexical units reflect hopelessness of a

request, contain an impression of sufferings, hard life. It is proved by the fact that a request is assumed by the Russian respondents first of all as a last resort, occurring as a result of some problems. In the American respondents' reactions, we can find only the lexical units having a hint of irritation that can be caused by a request.

The American respondents gave most of the associations belonging to the group of operational reactions. The lexical unit *ask* is the core of the associative field. The periphery begins with the lexical unit *want*. The core of the associative field in the group of the Russian respondents is also the lexical unit *ask*, but it is mentioned far more seldom. The periphery begins with the word *help*.

### Conclusion

The associative experiment allowed us to unveil the inner contents of the notion "request", its hidden sense existing in the consciousness of individual representatives of both the cultures. The words-reactions obtained in the course of the associative experiment reflected the individual experience of the respondents, having shown their unique attitude towards a request.

Comparing the sense bearing components of the word-stimulus *request* revealed in the associations of the representatives of the two cultures, we can admit that the American respondents demonstrate a formal and neutral attitude to a request, the attitude reflecting a personal need and concern. In the consciousness of the representatives of the Russian linguoculture a request is regarded as a bilateral process based on mutual respect and connected with deep emotions and personal feelings. The groups with descriptive associations, emotive and evaluating associations with a negative connotation, emotive and evaluating associations with a positive connotation are characterized by a greater number of the Russian respondents' reactions. The American respondents' reactions are specified by a minimal degree of variety.

### Конфликт интересов

Не указан.

### Рецензия

Все статьи проходят рецензирование. Но рецензент или автор статьи предпочли не публиковать рецензию к этой статье в открытом доступе. Рецензия может быть предоставлена компетентным органам по запросу.

### Conflict of Interest

None declared.

### Review

All articles are peer-reviewed. But the reviewer or the author of the article chose not to publish a review of this article in the public domain. The review can be provided to the competent authorities upon request.

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