

MULTIASPECT APPROACH TO THE STUDY OF A FRAGMENT OF THE PICTURE OF THE WORLD

Morel Morel D.A.

Belgorod National Research University,
Belgorod city, Belgorod region, Russia

The present paper shows the comprehensiveness of bringing into play a complex of empirical methods that allows to study not only the composition and organization of a concept, its position within the picture of the world, but also to reveal the newest trends of its development, to clarify its socio-psychological background, to retrace corresponding stereotypes, systems of norms and values.

Keywords: empirical methods; picture of the world; nominative field; associative field; interpretational field; semantic differential; gender; drinks.

The present paper is within the scope of the research the author has been carrying out to reveal national peculiarities of the universal concept “Drinks” that is an obligatory, immanent fragment of any national picture of the world (q.v. [3]).

The concept under study is notable for some features deriving from ontological and anthropological properties of drinks as a phenomenon of social life. On the one hand it can be referred to as a supracultural universal due to the vital function of drinks satisfying some basic physiological needs of humans. On the other hand it is an integral part of national culture and an important element of ethnic and social self-identification because of the involvement of drinks into different aspects of social life: “la boisson est également un élément fondamental de la vie en société. Elle définit une culture par sa nature... comme par son mode de consommation: elle scelle la communauté, primitive ou médiévale... elle souligne – vin, bière, whisky ou Coca-Cola – un type spécifique de relations humaines et de comportements quotidiens” [7].

Here we are to specialize our subject confining ourselves to the study of this concept featuring in the Russian teenagers’ picture of the world.

This group picture existing within the national one is somewhat distinguishing due to the specificity of this age when many stereotypes including gender ones, that will impact social behavior at a mature age, are forming and consolidating (for details see [4]). The latter circumstance makes for dramatic movements in the teenagers’ picture of the world within this age limits.

Studying senior pupils’ age group (14–15 years old) has a special social significance because of this period’s importance in virtue of its borderline—and somewhat existential—character. This short period usually indicated by the transition from high school to higher one serves as an edge symbolically separating childhood from adulthood. Therefore it is very important to know the features of consciousness matured by that time.

We have elaborated the research program of complex studying the whole system of verbal means representing the concept “Drinks” in the contemporary Russians’ linguistic picture of the world (see [5]). Such a study involves collection, processing, analyze, clusterization of materials, interpretation and modeling of derived results concerning the following aspects of the concept in question and

of its representation means: 1) nominative field; 2) associative field; 3) interpretational field [6: 63–64] (including any kinds of utterances—proverbs, sayings, aphorisms, precedential phrases, etc.—or even their discursive series—parables, anecdotes, written texts [*ibidem*: 130]); 4) ways of categorization; 5) prototypes and stereotypes (national, age, and gender specific ones); 6) axiological concept constituent (representing personal systems of values, likes and dislikes); 7) regulative concept constituent (representing personal and national behavior regulations and social prescriptions, “unwritten law”).

Such a diversity of considered aspects of representation means impelled us to have recourse to a whole complex of empirical research methods: open questionnaire survey, free and controlled associative experiment, interview, method of free classification, and method of semantic differential.

100 teenagers (52 girls and 48 boys) were surveyed.

Next follows the overview of obtained results.

1. Nominative field of the concept “Drinks” and categorization of drinks

The problem of drinks categorization was examined by J. Poitou and D. Dubois (University Lyon-2 and CNRS, France) who used the results of P. Scherfer’s (University of Wuppertal, Germany) survey of 105 German teenagers (13–14 years old) [8]. French scholars revealed 6 subcategories in their research: “milk drinks”, “hot drinks” (mostly nonalcoholic), “juices” (fruit and vegetable ones), “sodas”, “water” (still and fizzy), and “alcoholic drinks”.

The Russian nominative field of the concept “Drinks” built on the material of teenagers’ answers considerably differs from the German one.

1) Russian respondents’ answers are very rich in generic names of drinks of different hierarchical ranks up to denominations of “naïve” classification subcategories and such names are commonly of very high frequency. On the contrary, specific

names—essentially trademarks and collocations—dominate in answers of German respondents.

2) Undertaken semantic analysis and clusterization of collected data supported by the results of the free classification experiment allowed to reveal the pattern of categorizing drinks. There are 10 subcategories of drinks which are relevant for the linguistic consciousness of both male and female respondents of both examined age groups: “soda” (sweet fizzy drinks), “juice”, “water” (including soda water), “tea”, “coffee”, “milk drinks”; “cocktails” (both alcoholic and nonalcoholic); “spirits”, “wine”, “beer”.

For the graphic demonstration of received experimental data (distribution of drink names over revealed subcategories in types and in tokens) see Fig. 1.

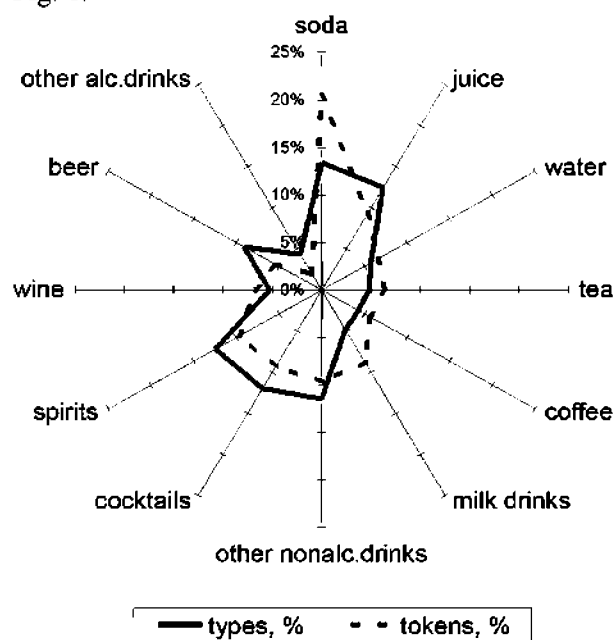


Fig. 1. Structure of the nominative field of the concept “Drinks”

Several gender-specific peculiarities should be noted here: “beer”, “spirits”, and “cocktails” subcategories are considerably more relevant for male respondents than for female ones; “soda”, “juice”, “water”, and “tea” subcategories are more significant in the eyes of female respondents.

Top-10 drinks names are чай, сок, кофе / молоко, тиво, вода / водка, лимонад, вино,

Фанта, Кока-кола, компот / Печси (in the order of decreasing).

2. Associative field of the concept "Drinks"

The analysis of the concept's name associative field is an important stage of the cognitive and sociolinguistic study giving abundant evidence [2].

The major part of the built associative field consists of different drinks names: 42,7% in types and 68,1% in tokens (including all top-frequent associations: *сок, вода, чай, кофе, лимонад, молоко, коктейль, пиво*).

The second, semantically incoherent part of associations can be referred to as the system of the frame "Drinks" representation. For the revealed frame structure see Fig. 2.

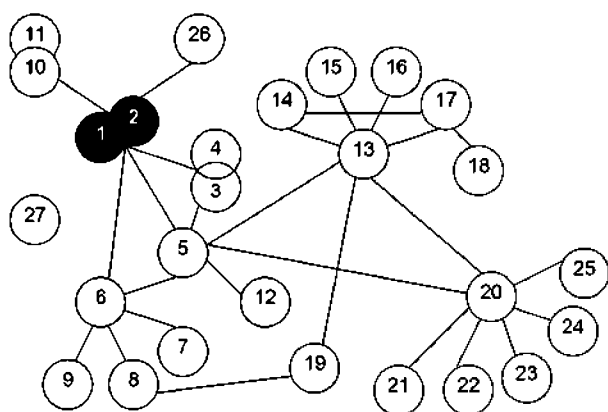


Fig. 2. Associative field patterning as the model of the frame "Drinks"

The following numerical denominations of slots are used: 1 – nonalcoholic drinks; 2 – alcoholic drinks; 3, 4 – types and properties of drinks; 5 – drinks consumption; 6 – psychophysiological states; 7 – thirst, its slaking; 8 – alcoholic intoxication; 9 – sensations; 10 – drinks ingredients; 11 – food; 12 – time; 13 – leisure; 14 – entertainment attributes; 15 – entertainments; 16 – leisure activities; 17 – places for entertainment; 18 – places for purchasing drinks; 19 – interpersonal relations, behavior; 20 – artifacts; 21 – artifacts for keeping drinks; 22 – artifacts for consuming drinks; 23 – artifacts for serving drinks; 24 – artifacts for preparing drinks; 25 – transport; 26 – natural phenomena; 27 – nationalities.

3. Interpretational field of the concept "Drinks"

We tend to classify representatives of the interpretational field under study into three types applying the criterion of the degree of their formalization (see Fig. 3, left):

A) "formalized" ones including different proverbs and sayings—so-called popular wisdom—completely assimilated by the national linguistic consciousness;

B) "formalizable" ones consisting of precedential utterances which origin and/or authorship are still vivid—aphorisms, quotations, toasts, truisms, advertising slogans (some of them being able to enter the national proverbial fund with the lapse of time enlarging the first group);

C) "informal" ones being transforms of the previous types' representatives—facetious aphorisms and rhymes, so-called "anti-proverbs" [1] ridiculing popular and literary wisdom as mouthpiece of traditionalistic value systems.

The representatives of the interpretational field under study can be also divided into three groups according their correlation with main categories of drinks:

A) ones including direct ("Гиннесс без виски – деньги на ветер") or indirect ("после первой не закусывают") mentions of alcoholic drinks (see Fig. 3, right);

B) ones including direct ("квас не Кола, пей Ни-колу!") or indirect ("не пей из лужицы, козленочком станешь") mentions of nonalcoholic drinks;

C) others (mentioning water as an element ("огонь да вода всему голова") or having no obvious relations with the concept under study "ждать у моря погоды").

4. Attitudes and stereotypes in respect of drinks

While using the method of semantic differential drinks were ranked by respondents on two scales: of personal relevance degree (from the highest to the lowest) and of evaluative attitude toward (from strictly positive to deeply negative).

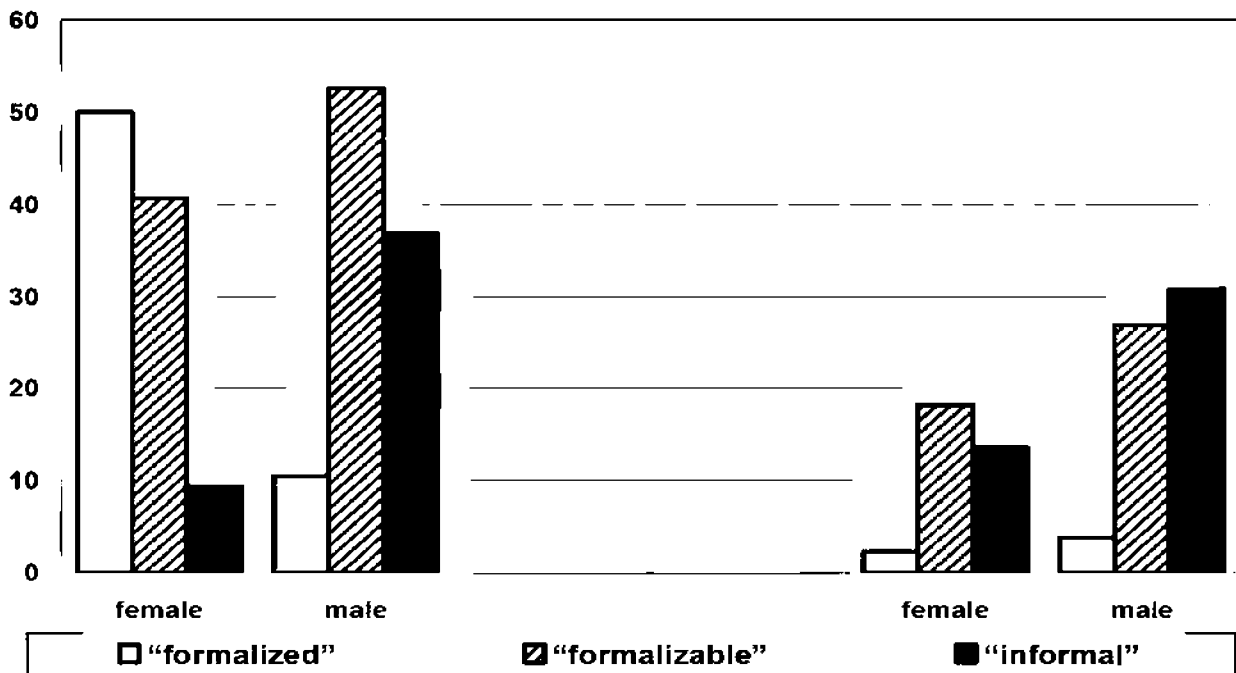


Fig. 3. Sharing of the types of the interpretational field representatives: general figures (left); manifesting alcoholic thematics (right)

According to the findings alcoholic drinks are considered generally negatively (on both principal categorial scales—“it is good / bad [for me]”, “it is significant / insignificant [for me]”—by respondents of both sexes, whereas nonalcoholic drinks are assessed mostly positively (see Fig. 4).

Thereafter the main amount of alcoholic drinks names is respectively positioned in the “negative”, 3rd quarter of the derived coordinate system, whereas the most relevant nonalcoholic drinks names are found in the “positive”, 1st one.

Vodka demonstrates the lowest indices on both sales in answers of both male and female respondents.

But at the same time vodka is stereotypically considered as the “prototypic Russian national drink” regardless gender assignment of respondents.

Respondents were given two questions: “What drink do you think to be the most typical for Russia?”, and “What drink reflects peculiarities of our people’s character and culture in the best way?” *Vodka* was the most frequent reaction in both cases (30–60%; upper level achieved in female respondents’ answers).

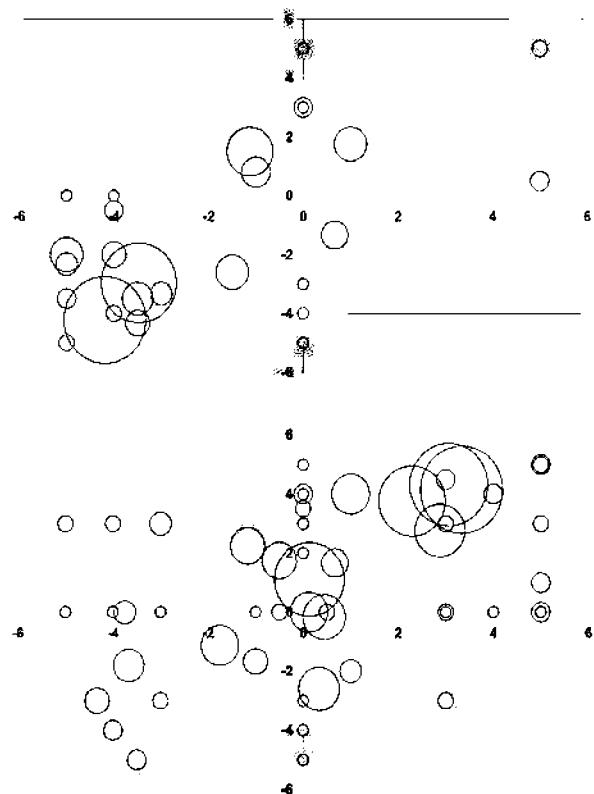


Fig. 4. Ranking of alcoholic (top) and nonalcoholic (bottom) drinks (axis x – personal relevance, axis y – evaluative attitude; area of circle is proportional to the frequency of mentioned drink)

The undertaken study lets us draw the following conclusions.

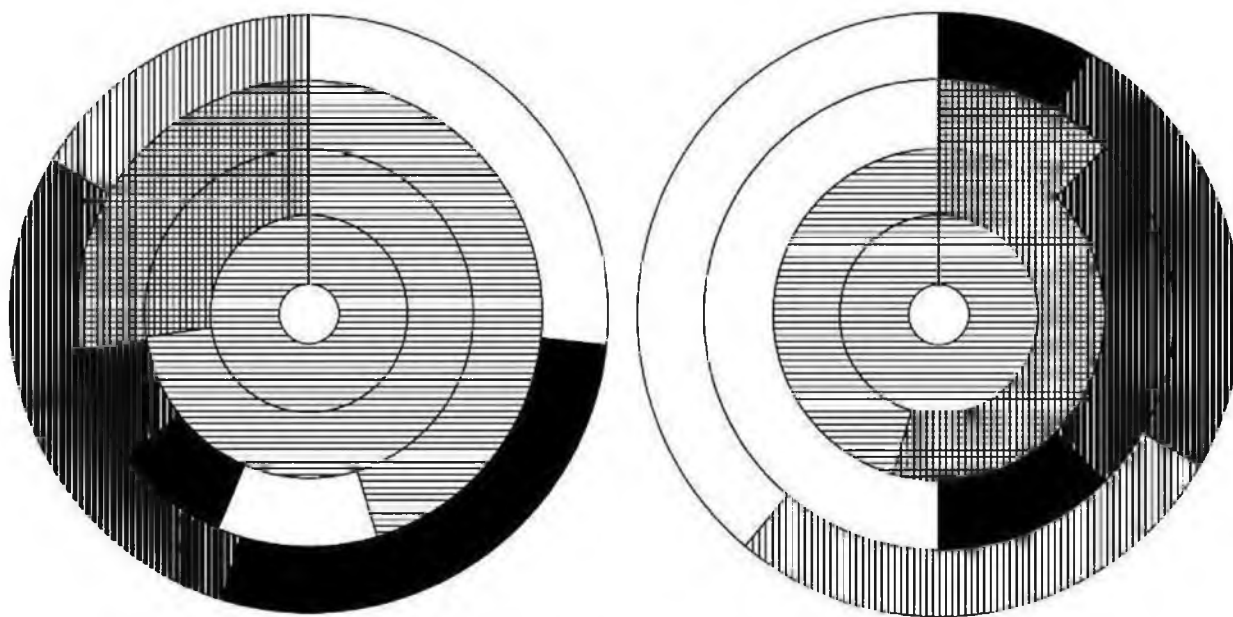


Fig. 5. Models of the nominative (left) and interpretational (right) fields of the concept "Drinks"

1. An adequate full-fledged study of any fragment of the picture of the world requires a multiaspect examination of its different representation means, thus a full complex of research methods is necessary. Such an approach allows to analyze not only the composition and organization of the studied concept, its position within the picture of the world, but to reveal its socio-psychological and cultural background, to retrace corresponding stereotypes, systems of social norms and values.

2. Multiaspect study of the concept "Drinks" bringing into play a complex of empirical methods gives a wider range of research material for further interpretation than the traditional handling of lexicographical and literary sources: it provides us with the information about the newest trends in the concept's development that could not be physically fixed promptly in the sources of the kind.

3. The fragment of the teenagers' picture of the world representing drinks is expectedly somewhat reduced compared to elder age groups, but already contains all relevant constituents. Its main peculiarity is its quasi gender balanced, slightly gender differentiated character that can be obviously

shown by way of the field models example (see Fig. 5).

In the diagrams above light sectors refer to female gender specific verbal reactions, dark sectors refer to male ones, horizontal hatching denotes common, gender undifferentiated reactions, vertical hatching marks verbal means related to alcoholic drinks.

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МНОГОАСПЕКТНЫЙ ПОДХОД К ИССЛЕДОВАНИЮ ФРАГМЕНТА КАРТИНЫ МИРА

Морель Морель Д.А.

Белгородский государственный национальный исследовательский университет,
г. Белгород, Белгородская область, Россия

Настоящая статья показывает всесторонность задействования комплекса эмпирических методов, что позволяет не только изучить состав и структуру концепта, его положение в картине мира, но также выявить новейшие тенденции в его развитии, пролить свет на его социально-психологический фон, отследить соответствующие стереотипы, системы норм и ценностей.

Ключевые слова: эмпирические методы; картина мира; номинативное поле; ассоциативное поле; интерпретационное поле; семантический дифференциал; гендер; напитки.