

The Perception of the *City* and the *Village* by Russian and Chinese Young Adults

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DOI: 10.18355/XL.2016.09.04.116-131

Abstract

In the present-day society, the process of urbanization is often seen as one of the global tendencies that may bring about immense positive and negative changes in the lives of people. It appears that urbanization is largely associated with rural-urban migration, which may affect the economies of towns, cities, and rural areas globally. It tends to be that the youth are a significant part of this migration process. To better understand the problem, attempts have been made to investigate the factors responsible for the youth migration through revealing the attitude of the youth to modern *city* and *village*. This was done with the help of a free association experiment, focusing on similarities and differences in the *city* and the *village* perception by Russian and Chinese young people. As a result, specific socio-cultural factors and differences in the *city* and the *village* perception among the youth were revealed, some of the causes of the undergoing territorial and social transformations were identified, which may allow predicting the prospects of the *city* and the *village* development in future.

Key words: Urbanization, rural-urban migration, the image of the *city*, the image of the *village*, free association experiment, sociolinguistics

1. Introduction

The 21st century is often related to the phenomenon of rapid urbanization. In 2008, for the first time in human history, the number of people living in urban areas surpassed the number living in rural areas. According to the UN report on world urbanization prospects, in July 2014, 54% of the world's population lived in urban areas, and it is expected that by 2050 66% of the world's population will be urban (2014: 1).

The growth of the urban population is largely associated with economic benefits that urban living can bring. It is true that cities concentrate much of the transportation, commerce, and cultural activities, provide greater access to better health services and education, thus offering a higher standard of living compared with rural areas. People frequently migrate to cities in search of employment; they are often attracted by better economic prospects and better opportunities for self-realization and personal development that cities offer. Modern cities cannot be imagined without art, libraries, theaters, museums, concert halls, parks, etc. Last but not least, urban living allows one to effectively organize one's free time. As a result, cities appear to offer more favorable living conditions as compared to rural areas. However, it is well known that under certain conditions the growth of urban areas may lead to negative consequences. One of these negative consequences is inequalities that exist within cities. This can be proved by the fact that at present millions of urban dwellers worldwide live in poverty. In some cases, irrational urban policy leads to urban sprawl or a large number of environmental problems such as air, water and noise pollution, traffic congestion, etc. Negative processes such as drug addiction, organized crime, child neglect are also often associated with cities. Nevertheless, it appears that negative aspects of city living do not often stop people from migrating to urban areas.

Nowadays, the process of urbanization is often viewed as one of the key tendencies characterizing modern society; as a result, the problem of urban and rural areas and their representation in the public consciousness appear to become of crucial importance in recent humanitarian interdisciplinary studies. Growing importance of cities, rural-urban migration and the changes that it brings about in public consciousness are often studied by economists, geographers, psychologists, sociologists, and linguists. Some of these studies are concerned with the problems of the *city's* image and its elements (Kevin Lynch, 1960; Avraham 2004; Evans and Show, 2004; Garcia, 2004, 2005; Dinnie, 2010; Duncan and Ley, 2013), the influence of the *city's* history, values and attitudes on the *city's* image, emotional attitude towards urban areas (Strauss, 1968; Van der Ryn, 1963; Pile, 2010; Slater and Anderson, 2012), the impact of age, gender, occupation on the perception of the *city* (Appleyard, 1970). Very often, the studies of urbanization are not limited to the analysis of urban areas and characteristics of urban living. On the opposite, they often focus on rural areas and the *village* (Connell, Dasgupta, Laishley and Lipton, 1976; Firebaugh, 1979; Korel, 1982; Arutyunyan, 1995; Chizhikov, 1999; Zegar, 2009; Grigoriev, 2010; Shkerin, 2012). A number of studies are devoted to the problem of internal migration, including rural-urban migration (Tarasova, 1995; Golovaschenko, 1996; Akhiezer, 2000; Mkrtchyan, 2003; Florinskaya, 2006; Nikiforov, 2007; Patsiorkovskii, 2010), etc.

This paper, which is part of a series of articles devoted to the sociolinguistic studies of the city (Mymrina, Abdrashitova, 2015), focuses on the possible causes of rural-urban migration that is currently taking place in most of the countries, including Russia and China. Through the linguistic analysis, thus, by investigating the specific perception of the *city* and the *village* by Russian and Chinese young people, we aim to reveal the reasons for present-day youth migration from small towns and rural areas to big cities and megalopolises.

2. Materials and methods

The research lies at the intersection of linguistics and sociology and studies the problem of the urban and rural population ratio by interpreting associative responses of respondents to the words-stimuli *CITY* and *VILLAGE*. The aim of the article is to identify the characteristics of the *city* and the *village* perception by Russian and Chinese young people with a special emphasis on the emotional and pragmatic attitude of the respondents to the places under study.

2.1. Method

The study relies on the material obtained in an experimental test, namely a *free association experiment* or *word association test*, which focuses on the perception of the fragment of reality, which is the most relevant at the moment of speech. Association experiments, which are widely used in psychology, sociology, psychiatry, psycholinguistics, etc. are often thought to provide access to public consciousness and allow researchers to reveal the details of perception of a fragment of reality which are typical of an average culture bearer, his motifs and priorities (Ufimtseva, 1996: 140), which is seen as one of the objectives of the present study. In a free association experiment, respondents are normally asked to provide word / words that come to their mind after they think over a word stimulus given to them (respondents are not limited in the type or number of verbal responses they may provide). Analyzing the frequency of reactions given, researchers can draw a conclusion on their relevance / irrelevance to the respondents. It is often true that the data obtained in a free association experiment are an important source of information for cross-cultural studies which may also reveal the forms of axiological perception of the world, factors that determine people's behaviour and spiritual / material culture of the people.

Applying a free association experiment to identify the specifics of the *city* and the *village* perception by Russian and Chinese young adults, we aim to reveal similar tendencies within the cultures studied. First of all, it is due to the fact that Russian and Chinese dictionary definitions of a *city* and a *village* are very much similar with a slight difference concerning the fact that the Chinese dictionary puts emphases on the *city*'s and *village*'s population density which is fully understandable and may be easily explained by the objective criteria. So, according to "Modern Dictionary of the Russian Language" by S. I. Ozhegov, a *city* is "a large settlement; an administrative, industrial, commercial and cultural center". In Chinese, 城市 (*chéng shì*) is defined as "densely-populated area with developed industry and trade, which is usually a political, economic and cultural center of a region" (<http://www.ichacha.net/hy/%E4%B9%A1%E6%9D%91.html>). Dictionary definitions of a *village* are also very much alike. So, "the Big Soviet Encyclopedia" defines a *village* as a small agricultural settlement, whose inhabitants are mostly farmers and farm workers." (<http://www.big-soviet.ru/165/24777/%D0%94%D0%B5%D1%80%D0%B5%D0%B2%D0%BD%D1%8F>). In Chinese, 乡村 (*xiāngcūn*) has the following characteristic feature: its residents are mainly engaged in agriculture; and the *population density* here is much lower compared to cities (<http://www.ichacha.net/hy/%E4%B9%A1%E6%9D%91.html>). Thus, apart from the population density mentioned above the definitions contain the same lexemes in both languages identifying the *city* with a political and industrial center and associating the *village* with agriculture and subsistence farming. On the other hand, it is expected that the study may also reveal some differences in the perception of the *city* and the *village* that are socially and culturally predetermined, though these differences may not be profound due to the global character of modern culture.

With the aim of revealing the specifics of the attitude to the *city* and the *village*, Russian and Chinese respondents were presented with the words-stimuli *CITY* and *VILLAGE* in the written form and were asked to give word / words that come to mind after they thought about the stimuli given to them. The respondents were free to include any reactions, belonging to different parts of speech, reactions-phrases, sentences, etc., thus, they were not limited in the type or number of verbal responses they could provide. The analysis of the associative reactions obtained allows revealing similarities and differences in the perception of the *city* and the *village* by Russian and Chinese young people, identifying the objects, which are socially important for the respondents, which makes it possible to predict the character and direction of their activity, and evaluate the prospects of urban and rural development in future.

2.2. Participants

The participants are 40 students between 18 and 26 years old, including 20 Russian second-year students of Tomsk State University of Architecture and Building (TSUAB) and 20 Chinese third-year – fifth-year students of National Research Tomsk Polytechnic University (TPU), participating in the TPU academic exchange programmes. The choice of the two groups of participants allows us to determine the factors that underlie the similarities, which are possibly due to processes of globalization, in the *city* and the *village* perception by the youth as well as the differences, which may be culturally-predetermined.

2.3. Materials

The material of the research are 479 and 510 associative reactions provided by the Chinese and Russian students respectively in response to the words-stimuli *CITY* and *VILLAGE*. The reactions obtained represent the associative relationships in the

consciousness of the respondents and, in bulk, give the idea of the objects described and reveal the image of the *city* and the *village*.

During the experiment the participants were not limited in the ways of giving reactions, were free in their choice of lexical units and relied only on their own experience and personal view of the *city* and the *village*.

2.4. Procedure

In the free association experiment, the respondents were presented with the words-stimuli *CITY* and *VILLAGE* in the written form and were instructed to supply words that first came to their mind. The words-stimuli were written in the middle of the page and were followed by a blank space in which participants had to write the first words that they could think of. The participants were given 20 minutes to supply their responses. The experiment was conducted in the students' classrooms at TPU and TSUAB. The respondents were asked neither to talk nor to somehow react during the test.

After the experiment, all the obtained reactions of the respondents were counted, ranked according to the degree of frequency and analyzed in terms of various parameters, including pragmatic and emotional ones.

3. Results and discussions

Analyzing associations to *CITY* and *VILLAGE*, we take into account that the present study focuses on the views of the fragments of the world characteristic of the bearers of the Russian and Chinese cultures which are reflected in verbal associations. So, we expect that together with the specifics of the world perception the study may reveal some of the tendencies that make today's society more globalised than ever.

So, firstly, let us consider the image of the *city* represented in the Russian and Chinese participants' consciousness. The total number of responses to the word-stimulus *CITY* provided by the Russian respondents in the free association experiment is 278; 40 out of them are single-individual responses. As for the Chinese participants, they gave 282 responses, 15 out of which were single-individual. In both cases no refusals to provide reactions were recorded.

The results of the free association experiment are shown in *Table 1*, which demonstrates the features which were most often associated with the *city*. Further on the frequency of different reactions will be shown in brackets.

Table 1. The responses (associations) to the word-stimulus CITY

Russian young adults	Chinese young adults
<i>Traffic jams (20), pollution (17), jobs and career (16), education (15), recreation and entertainment (14), opportunities (13), supermarkets (13), high buildings (13), noise (12), developed infrastructure (9), many cars (8), meeting new people (5), civilization (5), rush (5), lack of time (4), dependence on money (4), money (4), timely medical aid (4), lack of time (4), everything is near (3), beautiful (3), comfortable (3), routine (3), depression (3), diseases (3), convenient (3), great (2), stresses (2), evil people (2), parks</i>	<i>Environmental pollution (18), people (16), convenient transport (14), jobs (14), university (12), traffic jams (12), shops (10), buildings (10), a lot of rubbish (10), noise (8), cars (8), stadium (8), museum (8), park (8), big (8), psychological pressure (8), beautiful (8), delicious food (8), education (8), good clothes (6), school (6), trendy (6), supermarket (6), dwelling problems (6), good life (4), native (4), modern (4), comfortable (4), convenient (4), more opportunities to have a good time (4), administration</i>

<p>(2), transport (2), clean (2), facilities provided (2), museums (2), theatres (2), accessibility (2), dwelling problems (2), car accidents (2), nervous (1), danger (1), prices (1), conflicts with people (1), tough people (1), selfish people (1), good roads (1), hot water (1), libraries (1), hospitals (1), poor food quality (1), interesting (1), hazards (fire, electricity, etc.) (1), there is no unity with nature (1), little verdure (1), dust (1), competent specialists (1), innovations (1), great facilities (1), cool cars (1), modern architecture (1), fast pace of life (1), etc.</p>	<p>(3), unhealthy lifestyle (3), trouble (2), more opportunities (1), information (1), a higher salary (1), an opportunity to meet people (1), communication (1), market (1), bus (1), river (1), street (1), science (1), family (1), zoo (1), culture (1), architecture (1), flat (1), administration (1), unhealthy life style (1), active lifestyle (1), etc.</p>
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According to the results obtained, the Russian respondents' reactions appear to be more varied as they tend to more often appeal to their individual experience, which could be proved by a greater number of single-individual associations in comparison with the Chinese students (40:15). At the same time, the Russian and Chinese respondents show some similarity in the frequency of their reactions. So, the most frequent reaction of the Chinese students to the word-stimulus *CITY* is *environmental pollution* (18), while for the Russian students it is *traffic jams* (20), which indicates a fundamentally different perception of the *city* compared with traditional definitions, found in dictionaries, including those mentioned above. It seems to be that 90% of the Chinese and 100% of the Russian young people primarily associate the *city* with its most crucial problems and this is the idea that brings together these two different from the first sight most frequent reactions of the Russian and Chinese respondents. However, further responses are slightly different. For instance, the Chinese respondents also associate the *city* with a place where a large number of people live, with the second most frequent reaction being *people* (16). It is obvious that this response has much in common with the Chinese dictionary definition of the *city* and correlates with the objective reality. On the other hand, the Russian respondents associate the *city* with opportunities for self-development, education, career, recreation and entertainment. According to the data obtained, the most frequent associations of the Russian young adults to the word-stimulus *CITY* are *jobs and career* (16), *education* (15), *recreation and entertainment* (14), *opportunities* (13), *supermarkets* (13), *high buildings* (13). It is necessary to mention that the Chinese students also associate the *city* with *jobs* (14); at the same time, they place little importance on entertainment: only 4 respondents have included the association *more opportunities to have a good time* into their association list. It is also interesting that the Chinese young adults are more precise in their associations, which can be exemplified by the frequency of reactions dealing with the elements of the *city* infrastructure: *university* (12), *shops* (10), *buildings* (10), *cars* (8), *stadium* (8), *museum* (8), *park* (8), *school* (6), etc. In some instances, they evaluate the usefulness and benefits of these elements by giving a) collocations containing descriptive attributes: *convenient transport* (14), *delicious food* (8), *good clothes* (6), *a higher salary* (1); or b) adjectives with positive connotation: *big* (8), *beautiful* (8), *trendy* (6), *native* (4), *modern* (4), *comfortable* (4), *convenient* (4). Apart from mentioned above the Russian respondents point out such advantages of city life as *developed infrastructure* (9), *many cars* (8), *meeting new people* (5), *civilization* (5), *money* (4), *timely medical aid* (4), *everything is near* (3), *facilities provided* (2). At the same time

the Russian participants are not as unanimous as the Chinese ones in their attribute-based associations thus giving single-individual or rare responses of that kind: *beautiful* (8), *comfortable* (4), *great* (2), *clean* (2), *interesting* (1). On the whole, it appears that despite the variety of the reactions given, they manage to create a unique rather positive image of the *city* which is mainly associated by both Chinese and Russian respondents with the opportunities for self-expression, communication as well as comfortable environment.

On the other hand, as far as emotional perception is regarded, it may be claimed that negative associations to *CITY* are also rather frequent. Apart from the above-mentioned traffic congestion and environmental problems, the Chinese participants speak about *psychological pressure* (8) and *unhealthy lifestyle* (3), which are especially characteristic of urban living. These correspond to the Russian young adults' associations such as *depression* (3), *diseases* (3), and *stresses* (2). On the whole, the Russian respondents list a larger number of negative effects, related to city living. All these negative effects are the result of the poor environment, time pressure and rapid lifestyle, which obviously can adversely affect a person's living in the *city*: *rush* (5), *lack of time* (4), *dependence on money* (4), *routine* (3), *depression* (3), *diseases* (3), *stresses* (2), *evil people* (2), *nervous* (1), *danger* (1), *prices* (1), *conflicts with people* (1), *tough people* (1), *selfish people* (1). Still, as it is seen from the number of reactions given in brackets, negative responses, although totally numerous, mostly represent individual associations with the *city* life based on personal experience and if taken separately fall to the periphery of reactions.

Figure 1 and Figure 2 show the nuclear features of the *city*, which were discovered in the course of the study, and demonstrate the close and remote periphery of the concept.

Figure 1. Russian young adults' associations to the word-stimulus *CITY*

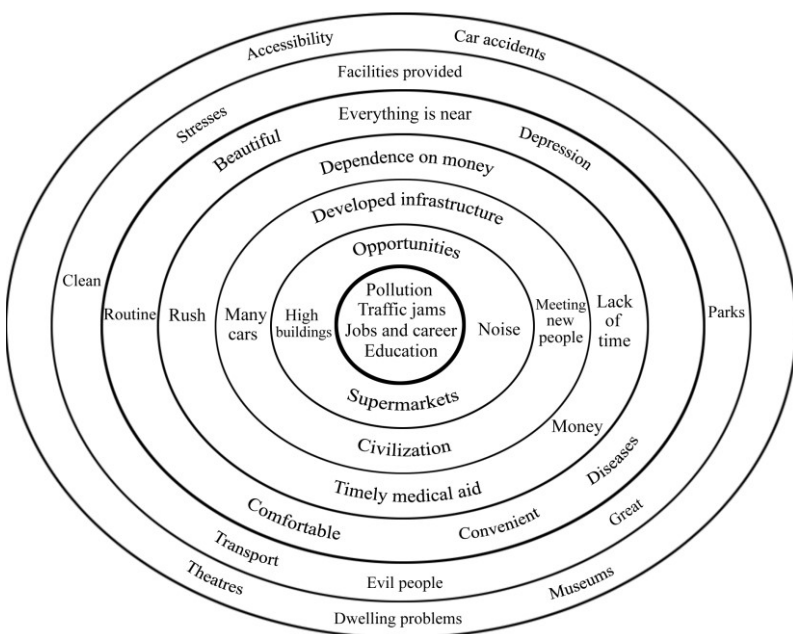
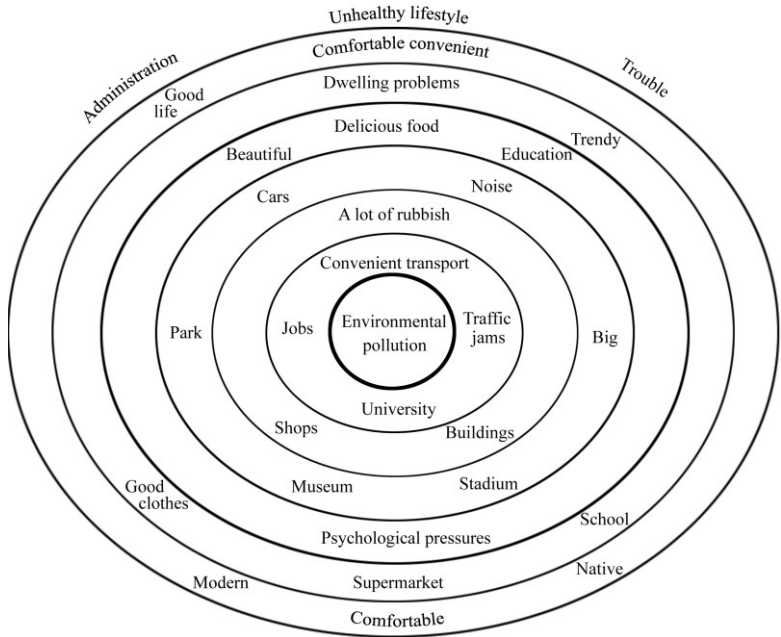


Figure 2. Chinese young adults' associations to the word-stimulus *CITY*



The comparison of the pragmatic perception of the *city* by the Russian and Chinese respondents has shown that both groups consider cities to be useful and comfortable, despite several drawbacks of urban living, mentioned above. To create a wider picture of the pragmatic attitude to the *city*, the results obtained have been analyzed from the standpoint of the parameters which appear to be indicative of a person's system of views concerning the advantages of city living. These parameters include characteristics of the living conditions, employment / occupation, recreation, prestige / status and the environmental factor.

So, as it was expected, living conditions have a large value both for the Russian and Chinese young adults. This can be proved by the Russian respondents' associations to *CITY* (58 reactions (21%)), including: *supermarkets* (13), *developed infrastructure* (9), *civilization* (5), *timely medical aid* (4), *convenient* (3), *everything is near* (3), *comfortable* (3), *parks* (2), *transport* (2), *clean* (2), *facilities provided* (2), *museums* (2), *theatres* (2), *accessibility* (2), *dwelling problems* (2), *good roads* (1), *hot water* (1), *libraries* (1), *hospitals* (1), *poor food quality* (1). Among the Chinese respondents, associations related to the assessment of the living environment, rank first in frequency and make up 42% of the total number of reactions provided: *convenient transport* (14), *university* (12), *shops* (10), *buildings* (10), *cars* (8), *stadium* (8), *delicious food* (8), *park* (8), *trendy* (6), *supermarket* (6), *good clothes* (6), *dwelling problems* (6), *modern* (4), *comfortable* (4), *administration* (3), *an opportunity to meet people* (1), *communication* (1), *market* (1), *bus* (1), *river* (1), *street* (1).

Another pragmatic parameter to be discussed is the assessment of the employment / occupation. Thus, the Russian respondents have provided 62 reactions related to this parameter, which makes up 22% of the total number of the associations: *jobs and career* (16), *education* (15), *opportunities* (13), *meeting new people* (5), *rush* (5), *lack of time* (4), *routine* (3), *fast pace of life* (1). It should be noticed that together

with the positive assessment of the job opportunities the Russian students mention the negative consequences of high job engagement: *rush* (5), *lack of time* (4), *routine* (3). The Chinese young people give fewer total associations connected with the employment parameter making all in all 40 associations to the word-stimulus (14 % of the total number of the reactions), but the number of the most frequent responses and their content are quite similar to those of the Russian students thus showing that representatives of both cultures attach equal importance to this aspect : *jobs* (14), *university* (12), *education* (8), *school* (6).

From the point of view of prestige and status, the Russian and Chinese students' responses can correlate in content and number: 29 reactions, related to this parameter, have been received from the Russian students, which makes up 10% of the total number of the reactions, and 30 associations or 10% accordingly were provided by the Chinese students. The Russian young people mention *high buildings* (13), *money* (4), *dependence on money* (4), *beautiful* (3), *great facilities* (1), *cool cars* (1), *modern architecture* (1), *competent specialists* (1), *innovations* (1). The Chinese young people provide the following characteristics: *trendy* (6), *good clothes* (6), *modern* (4), *good life* (4), *convenient* (4), *administration* (3), *more opportunities* (1), *a higher salary* (1), *information* (1).

Judging by the associations provided, the environmental parameter is of great significance for the Russian and Chinese youth. So, 64 associations by the Russian students, or 23% of the total number, refer to the environmental problems and their consequences: *traffic jams* (20), *pollution* (17), *noise* (12), *depression* (3), *diseases* (3), *stresses* (2), *car accidents* (2), *hazards (fire, electricity, etc.)* (1), *there is no unity with nature* (1), *little verdure* (1), *dust* (1). 53 Chinese students' reactions, or 19% of the total number, are also associated with environmental issues: *environmental pollution* (18), *traffic jams* (12), *a lot of rubbish* (10), *noise* (8), *unhealthy lifestyle* (3), and *trouble* (2). It means that both Russian and Chinese young people fully realize the negative points of city life which are the direct results of the urbanization process as a whole.

Thus, the largest number of the Russians and Chinese respondents' pragmatic reactions are related to the characteristics of living conditions, employment and environment, which appear to be of paramount importance for today's young adult. It is crucial to notice, however, that these parameters of city life which are most significant for the respondents are indicated by opposite emotional reactions which mark living conditions and employment opportunities by positive and the environment chiefly by negative reactions, thus emphasizing the respondents' strive for the former and the necessity of reconciliation with the latter. Moreover, the analyzed data show that the Chinese students greatly appreciate the comfort and the conditions of life, provided by the *city*, while the Russian participants set a higher value on recreation facilities. However, the Russian and Chinese respondents coincide in their attitude towards employment / occupation, which is often thought to be the main advantage of urban living. So, it may be concluded that the Russian and Chinese students' associative-verbal reactions to *CITY* create a rather ambiguous image of the *city*. Despite this, the results of the experiment have shown that the majority of the Russian and Chinese respondents, 90% and 95%, respectively, support the idea of city living, being mainly ruled by the pragmatic factors, including opportunities to find jobs and earn money as well as comfortable living conditions and much entertainment.

The second part of the research focuses on the attitude of young adults to the *village*. So, let us consider the reactions of the respondents to the word-stimulus *VILLAGE* and rank them according to their frequency. The total number of responses provided by the Russian respondents is 232; 42 out of them are single-individual responses, while the Chinese participants gave 197 responses, 10 out of which are

single-individual responses. At this stage of the experiment, in both cases no refusals to provide responses were recorded.

The results of the free association experiment are shown in *Table 2*, which demonstrates the features which were most often associated with the *village*.

Table 2. The responses (associations) to the word-stimulus VILLAGE

Russian young adults	Chinese young adults
<p><i>Fresh air (20), nature (17), tranquility (10), quietness (10), natural food (7), berries and mushrooms (6), little opportunity for professional development (5), you (one) can have a rest (5), no job (4), river (4), forest (4), far from civilization (3), poor medical treatment (3), lack of essential things (3), poor (3), poor goods supply at shops (3), fresh milk (3), beauty (3), far from the city (3), dirty (3), low pay (2), private enterprise (2), no hot water (2), fishing (2), problems with transport (1), no access to up-to-date information (1), few modern facilities (1), no infrastructure (1), no comfortable conditions (1), stupid people (1), less competitive (1), independence (1), festivals (1), hunting (1), outdoor activities (1), fishing rod (1), fires (1), buns (1), happiness (1), perfect spiritual state of mind (1), monotonous dull life (1), nowhere to go (1), loneliness (1), etc.</i></p>	<p><i>Fresh air (19), poor road (12), nature (10), forest (10), river (8), uncomfortable transport (8), few shops (6), lake (6), trees (6), sameness (6), animals (5), few cars (4), problems of public health service (4), no opportunities to get education (4), uncomfortable (4), no job (3), milk (3), slow pace of life (3), animals (3), fresh products (3), flowers (1), rice (1), undeveloped (1), honey (1), dog (1), etc.</i></p>

Considering the results of the free associative experiment, it should be noted that the percentage of single-individual reactions provided by the Russian respondents is much higher than that given by the Chinese young adults. A similar tendency was observed in the first part of the experiment when the Russian respondents demonstrated much higher percentage of single-individual reactions to the word-stimulus *CITY* in comparison with the Chinese respondents. This fact may indicate that the Russian students' reactions appear to be more individual, thus related to their personal experience.

Despite the fact that most of the Russian and Chinese respondents speak in favour of living in the *city*, the reactions obtained show that their attitude to the *village* is on the whole positive and even romantic and enthusiastic to some extent. The young people, the representatives of the Russian and Chinese cultures, enjoy the beauty of nature, country's vast expanses, fresh products, freedom and fresh air. In this way, they contrast the *village* with the *city* and its ecological problems. In addition, both Chinese and Russian respondents emphasize the significance of the ecological parameter, which is reflected in the correlation between frequent reactions to the words-stimuli *CITY* and *VILLAGE*: *traffic jams* and *pollution* and *clean air* and *nature* respectively. Thus, it appears that today's young people associate the *city* and

the *village* with the presence or absence of ecological problems. The ecological parameter represented by negative associations that are evoked by living in the city is reflected in a variety of positive associations to the word-stimulus *VILLAGE*. So, for the Russian respondents *VILLAGE* correlates with *fresh air* (20), *nature* (17), *tranquility* (10), *quietness* (10), *natural food* (7), *berries and mushrooms* (6), *river* (4), *forest* (4), etc. For the Chinese respondents *VILLAGE* is associated with *fresh air* (19), *nature* (10), *forest* (10), *river* (8), *lake* (6), *trees* (6), *animals* (5), *few cars* (4), *milk* (3), *flowers* (1), *rice* (1). On the whole, the percentage of positive reactions provided by the Russian and Chinese respondents is virtually identical. The reactions represented by lexemes with positive connotation make 57% and 56% of the total number of reactions respectively.

All the negative associations are related to the pragmatic aspect, which can be explained by the insufficient development of infrastructure, lack of job opportunities, low income, and domestic problems and are expressed by:

a) the collocations containing the lexemes with negative connotation such as *poor* (3), *far from civilization* (3), *poor medical treatment* (3), *lack of essential things* (3), *poor goods supply at shops* (3), *far from the city* (3), *low pay* (2), *problems with transport* (1) (the Russian respondents); *poor road* (12), *uncomfortable transport* (8), *problems of public health service* (4), *slow pace of life* (3) (the Chinese respondents);

b) combination of nouns with the indefinite numeral adjectives *little / few* or the negative particle *no*: *little opportunity for professional development* (5), *no job* (4), *no hot water* (2), *no access to up-to-date information* (1), *few modern facilities* (1), *no infrastructure* (1), *no comfortable conditions* (1) (the Russian students) and *few shops* (6), *no opportunities to get education* (4), *no job* (3) (the Chinese students).

c) single noun or adjective lexemes with negative connotation sometimes also containing negative prefix *un*: *dirty* (3) (The Russian respondents); *sameness* (6), *uncomfortable* (4), *undeveloped* (1) (the Chinese respondents).

It should be mentioned that the negative reactions by the Russian students are among peripheral ones and make up 18% of the total number whereas the negative reactions by the Chinese participants are greater in number and account for 32% of the total number of the associations provided. In general, these data correlate with the results obtained in the first part of the experiment where the Chinese students, expressing their reactions to the word-stimulus *CITY*, highlight the significance of comfortable living conditions. It appears that this fact may explain a higher percentage of negative reactions associated with the pragmatic perception of the *village*.

Figure 3 and Figure 4 show the nuclear features of the *village*, discovered in the course of the study, and demonstrate the close and remote periphery of the concept.

Figure 3. Russian young adults' associations to the word-stimulus *VILLAGE*

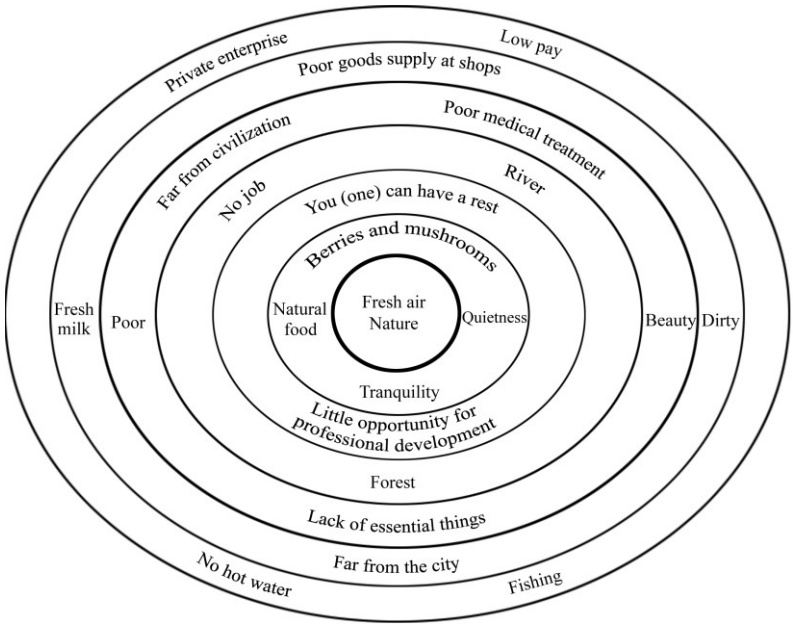
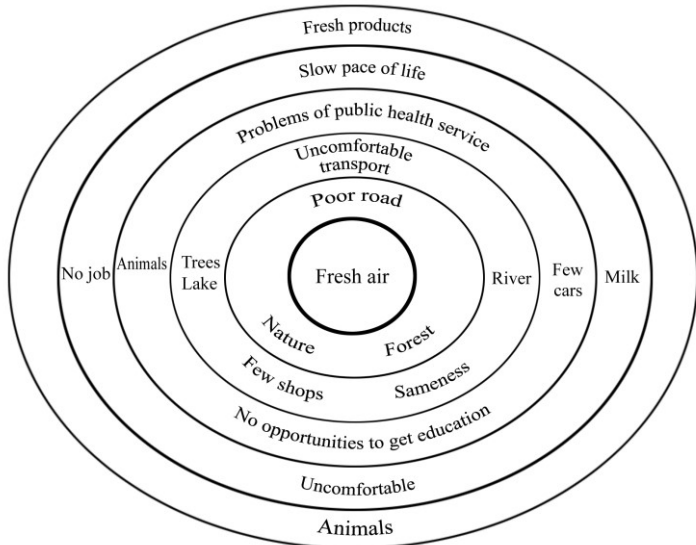


Figure 4. Chinese young adults' associations to the word-stimulus *VILLAGE*



Another important point in the evaluation of the *village* from a pragmatic perspective is to reveal the respondents' perception of the place from the standpoint of prestige and status. For instance, while analyzing the Russian respondents' reactions, it was noticed that the parameter of prestige and status is represented by a rather limited number of ambivalent reactions. They are either negative, for example, *far from civilization* (3), *stupid people* (1), *no job* (4) or positive, for instance, *private enterprise* (2), *less competitive* (1), *independence* (1). The same tendency can be observed in the attitude of the Chinese young people to the *village*: still it may be concluded that most of their reactions characterize the *village* rather negatively (see above).

Finally, it should be mentioned that recreation as another significant aspect in the pragmatic assessment of rural living is also represented differently in the system of the Russian and Chinese respondents' associations. Thus, the Chinese young adults provide no associations that could directly characterize recreation in the *village*. This fact confirms that today's young people from China believe that the cultural sector and recreation in the *village* are not well developed, which could be one of many reasons for the youth's migration to town. Interestingly, the Russian respondents often associate the *village* with recreation, thus contrasting the *village* with the *city* and work associated with the latter. The following reactions by the Russian respondents are among pragmatic ones that characterize recreation in the *village*: *you (one) can have a rest* (5), *fishing* (2), *fresh milk* (3), *beauty* (3), *festivals* (1), *hunting* (1), *outdoor activities* (1), *fishing rod* (1), *fires* (1), *buns* (1), *happiness* (1), *good spirits* (1), apart from indirect reactions such as *tranquility* (10), *quietness* (10) etc. On the other hand, there is an insignificant number of reactions which emphasize the insufficient development of recreational activities, for instance, *monotonous dull life* (1), *nowhere to go* (1), *loneliness* (1).

Thus, according to the results obtained it can be stated that the perception of the *village* by the Russian and Chinese respondents is quite different on the one hand and is often realized through opposition to the *city* on the other hand. The difference mainly concerns pragmatic factors. The Chinese participants hardly regard the *village* as a good and perspective place in the aspect of career, recreation and comfort whereas the Russian respondents though realizing the disadvantages in the opportunities and facilities in comparison with the *city* still consider the *village* to be able to give them the possibility for self-realization in business due to low competitiveness as well as for recreation thanks to its unspoiled and quiet environment. Moreover, a large percentage of the Russian participants show great interest in the *village* as a place of rest and relaxation thus opposing it to the *city*. Besides, a small percentage of the Russian students express their readiness and even willingness to live in the *village* but situated close to the *city* so that it might be possible for them to commute to the *city* for work or to live in the *village* and take advantage of its benefits working via Internet.

Thus, it may be concluded that the similarity in the perception of the *village* by the Russian and Chinese respondents mainly lies in the fact that the representatives of both cultures imagine the *village* as an ideal place from the ecological point of view, but inconsistent living conditions and job prospects turn the balance in favour of the *city*.

4. Conclusion

The results of the present study are of dual significance for the present-day science:

1. They surely have lingvocultural importance as they are connected with the investigation and interpretation of the linguistic data and draw conclusions on the

common and specific cultural features of the Russian and Chinese young adults' perception of the notions under study, i.e. the *city* and the *village*.

2. They are also of applied and sociological relevance since they clearly show the direction of the development of the *city* and the *village* from the point of view of the younger generation which is to build the upcoming future.

Blending these together, it is possible to say that this study revealing the understanding of the Russian and Chinese young adults of the *city* and the *village* and demonstrating their attitude towards the notions at the same time manages to show the youth's desires, plans and perspectives underlying their future actions as well as give evidence on how interconnected the perception of a certain fragment of reality by different cultures might be and how influential the process of globalization is in modern world.

To go into details it is necessary to mention that the perception of the *city* by the Russian and Chinese respondents displays great similarity in that it is fully pragmatic. Thus, the representatives of both cultures completely realize the problems of modern *city* including poor environmental conditions and all the consequences that come with them such as bad health and improper quality of food, overpopulation which brings overcrowdedness, high competitiveness, traffic jams, etc. Nevertheless their positive impressions about the *city* still dominate as the young people of the two cultures are led by their hopes for the favourable succession of life events and prestige of city life. So, the Chinese and Russian students associate the *city* with greater job opportunities, higher standard living conditions, with the Chinese participants ranking these two as the ideas of paramount importance and the Russians putting emphasis on the employment together with recreation possibilities. Actually here we come to the point which marks the differences in the Russian and Chinese attitudes towards the *city*. The Chinese respondents express their desire to work, earn good money to ensure better living conditions putting the latter as their general aim. The Russian participants think more about recreation opportunities regarding good job and money as a means providing the opportunity to rest in quality.

What concerns the *village*, the results of the present study also demonstrate some similarity in its perception by the Russian and Chinese youth. To be more precise it is necessary to mention that positive responses of the representatives of both cultures mainly coincide and make the most of the total reactions. Besides, the Russian and Chinese young adults show stunning unanimity choosing the tendency to describe the *village* through its opposition to the *city*. Consequently, the *village* is positively assessed there where the *city* receives the largest number of negative responses and vice versa. For instance, young adults are optimistic in what concerns environmental conditions and represent the *village* as a tranquil and quiet place which is close to nature with fresh air. But the pragmatic responses related to the employment and living condition prospects show the young people's dissatisfaction with the infrastructure and amenities provided by the *village*. Strangely, the Russian participants having placed a great importance on the *city's* recreation aspect equally mark the *village* as a good place for alternative rest, thus, mostly regarding the *village* as a recreational area ensuring comfortable relaxation for urban dwellers. The Chinese respondents on the contrary "refuse" the *village* the possibility of providing good rest giving indirect responses which could only roughly refer to recreational parameter such as *forest* (10), *river* (8), *lake* (6) which compared with the Russian direct *you* (one) can have a rest (5), *fishing* (2), *festivals* (1), *hunting* (1), *outdoor activities* (1), *fishing rod* (1), *fires* (1) and indirect responses *tranquility* (10), *quietness* (10), *natural food* (7), *berries and mushrooms* (6), *river* (4), *forest* (4) makes certain difference.

Summing everything up, it may be concluded that the process of urbanization together with rural-urban migration will hardly stop both in Russia and China in the recent years. The young generation being extremely pragmatic in mind set their views

to the *city* regarding it as a place which guarantees higher life standards in comparison with the *village* and thus appears more attractive for young people. There is no denying that this is an alarming tendency both for the *village* and the *city*. First, it predicts uncertain future to the *village*, the population of which may rapidly grow old and, as a consequence, some villages can disappear altogether. Second, the *city* apart from its ecological problems and overpopulation can come to new challenges connected with the lack of food produced by rural population. So, if nothing is changed in the near future, the world may have to face new serious problems.

Acknowledgements

This work is funded within the framework of realization of Strategic Programme on National Research Tomsk Polytechnic University Competitiveness Enhancement in the Group of Top Level World Research and Academic Institutions.

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Words: 7 205

Characters: 46 832 (26,01 standard pages)

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