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**MULTILINGUAL ASSOCIATIVE THESAURUS OF POLITENESS:  
STAGE 1**

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***Abstract***

The article focuses on compiling multilingual associative thesaurus of politeness. At the first stage of the project the list of word cues was obtained by mutually verifiable methods. The procedure of selecting cues started with component and definition analysis which were used to reveal the semantic components of politeness fixed in the lexicographical sources. It was followed by free word association experiment which is considered to be an effective tool for studying organization of lexicon. In order to clarify and supplement the free association data the method of mind maps was used. It extended the number of prospective links that the cue word activated. The multilingual associative thesaurus based on the systematization of associative data dedicated to politeness makes it possible to reveal not only universal, but also ethnic patterns of associative norms, which reflect linguistic and cultural stereotypes of politeness. This project would contribute to the solution of fundamental problems connected with the correlation of universal, ethnic and individual in speech activity and the content of the images of the world of representatives of different cultures. It would help eliminate semantic “gaps” in the field of polite behavior and diminish intercultural communicative failures in the period of rude and unfriendly moods in modern multicultural society.

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**Keywords:** Multilingual, politeness, thesaurus, word association, word cue.



## 1. Introduction

Cultural and speech traditions have been evolving for centuries forming ethical and aesthetic values, represented in a certain language. In this regard politeness has become a subject of multiple academic studies in linguistics (Al-Mansoob, Patil, & Alrefaee, 2019; Chocron, Fontaine, & Ringeissen, 2020; Isosävi, 2020; Locher & Larina, 2019; Stepykin, 2014). Due to rude and unfriendly moods in modern society the number of articles dedicated to the category of (im)politeness has drastically increased (Al-Ghamdi, Almansoob, & Alrefaee, 2019; Anderson & Huntington, 2017; Haugh & Kádár, 2017; Ismail & Shanmuganathan, 2019; Masullo, Chen, & Lu, 2017; Sinkeviciute, 2015). Despite numerous studies in this field there are still some arguments and problems unsolved. The researchers haven't come to consensus on the origin of politeness, as well as on how it is formed and used by native speakers. The ethnically specific ways of its verbal representation are not fully studied.

## 2. Problem Statement

Being one of the most important cultural concepts politeness determines functioning of each society and forms the speakers' image of the world. A comprehensive cross-cultural study of politeness as one of the basic mental formations is going to be useful for further theoretical understanding of the correlation between mental representation and language structures in a variety of populations. This research should be based on word association norms, which provide access to the organization of the lexicon.

Compilers of associative dictionaries focus on monolingual language material (Karaulov, Sorokin, Tarasov, Ufimtseva, & Cherkasova, 1994; Kiss, Armstrong, & Milroy, 1972; Palermo & Jenkins, 1964; Vivas, Vivas, Comesaña, Coni, & Vorano, 2017). There are some examples of multilingual norms of word association (Postman & Keppel, 1970; Ufimtseva, Cherkasova, Karaulov, & Tarasov, 2004). The researchers can use different models to analyze the value of associative data (Buchanan, Valentine, & Maxwell, 2018, 2019; De Deyne, Navarro, Perfors, & Storms, 2016; De Deyne, Navarro, Perfors, Brysbaert, & Storms, 2019; Kenett, Levi, Anaki, & Faust, 2017; Van Rensbergen, De Deyne, & Storms, 2016). It should be noted that most associative dictionaries represent the information in alphabetical order. The choice of word association cues in most studies relies either on the word's frequency or on the researcher's goals and intentions. The assumption that words are stored as nodes in interconnected network proves the reasonability and efficiency of organizing associative data in accordance with the thematic principle. Politeness was chosen as the key word association cue in our project due to several reasons. "Multilingual Associative Thesaurus of Politeness" is supposed to reveal the intra-lexical links that stem from the stimulus and identify ethnolinguistic stereotypes of politeness. Thorough analysis of the associative data would be particularly useful for the development and optimization of intercultural communication. It would also contribute to solving the problem of fixing the national and cultural specificity of speakers' language consciousness and create methods of teaching intercultural communication in order to achieve maximum efficiency of intercultural communication and overcome the cultural and linguistic barriers.

### 3. Research Questions

The following research questions were raised at the first stage of compiling multilingual thematic associative thesaurus dedicated to the category of politeness. What does the procedure for selecting cues involve, namely methods of research, the number and range of cues used in one experiment, the number of respondents taking part in the experiment, their sex, age and status? Similar questions appeared in the articles of other researchers who used to deal with free association method (Brysbaert, 2019; Playfoot et al., 2016).

### 4. Purpose of the Study

“Multilingual Associative Thesaurus of Politeness” continues the traditions of associative lexicography building interconnected network of words related to politeness. At this stage of the project it is planned to establish the procedure of selecting cues for compiling the thesaurus.

### 5. Research Methods

In order to select the cues we used component and definition analysis, free word association method and mind mapping. The first two methods reveal the semantic content of politeness fixed in lexicographic sources. Free word association helps find the strongest links between words in the respondents' vocabulary. Though some researches still argue about that the findings of Playfoot et al. (2016) prove that word association responses are likely to reflect the first word that comes to the respondents' mind. The method of mind maps increases the number of potentially possible communicative situations that the cue activates and allows to clarify and supplement the free association data.

### 6. Findings

Stage 1 of the project "Multilingual Associative Thesaurus of Politeness" includes the procedure of selecting stimuli for the dictionary entries. We are going to clarify this procedure on the material of English.

According to the integrated analysis of lexicographic sources *politeness* as a lexeme includes the following components: *affability, amenity, amiability, benevolence, civility, comity, complaisance, considerate, courtesy, courteousness, courtliness, decorum, elegance of manners, favour, gentility, good-breeding, norms, refinement, regard, respectful, social, suavity, tact, urbanity, usage*. These are the cues for the free association experiment.

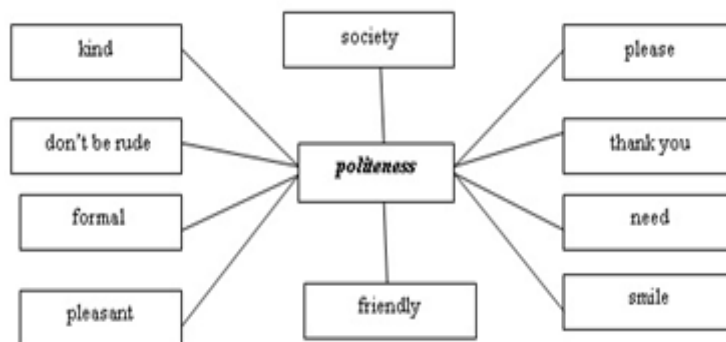
Free association experiment is the second step of the procedure. It was conducted in 2019 – 2020 and involved 100 respondents. Most of them were students. Both personal contacts and online forums and chats were used to distribute the questionnaires. The informants were presented with the word cue *politeness* and some other words which were not semantically connected with the cue (Appendix A).

The exact instructions were as follows:

*We kindly ask you to respond with the first associated word that comes to your mind.*

It should be noted that the start and end time of the experiment was indicated on the blank of the questionnaire. If it took the respondent more than 1 min. to fulfill the assignment we didn't take into account the obtained data.

In order to clarify and supplement the free association data the method of mind maps (Figure 01) was used. There were 10 fulfilled mind maps.



**Figure 01.** Mind map *politeness*

Having integrated the results of two experiments and the data of lexicographical sources we made up the list of cues for the prospective thesaurus entries: *affability, amenity, amiability, attention, attentive, behaviour, being kind, benevolence, body language, Britain, calm, careful, charm, charming, civil, civility, classy, clothes, comity, company, complaisance, considerate, consideration, conversation, courteous, courtesy, courteousness, courtliness, decent, don't be rude, decorum, dull, educated, elderly, elegance of manners, emptiness, etiquette, excessive, excuse me, eye contact, favour, flowers, formal, friend, friendly, generous, gentility, gentleman, good, good-breeding, good manners, good morning, hand shake, hat, hello, helpful, hospitality, important, kind, kind man, kindness, let someone go first, listening, manner, manners, meet, meeting, modest, necessary, need, nice, nod, norms, not at all, opening the door, pleasant, please, polite, prince, private school, proper, quiet, raise hand, refinement, regard, respect, respectful, rule, rude, sensibility, servility, shake hands, shaking hands, silence, small talk, smile, smiling, smooth, social, social situations, society, sorry, speech, stiff, suavity, suit, table manners, tact, thanks, tea, thank you, the British, the Queen, unselfish, upbringing, urbane, urbanity, usage, virtue, waiting turn, watch others feelings, well dressed, well mannered.*

## 7. Conclusion

The first stage of compiling a multilingual associative thesaurus of politeness included a three-step empirical study. Mutually verifiable methods were used to obtain the list of word cues for the subsequent free association experiment. A similar procedure for selecting cues can be proposed for compiling dictionary entries of the associative thesaurus in Russian, Italian, Chinese, and other languages. Thorough analysis of associative data is going to open up new promising directions in the study of word semantics, mechanisms of speech activity, and in other fields of linguistic and cross-cultural studies. The revealed ethno-linguistic and cultural stereotypes of politeness are going to contribute to the theory of cross-cultural communication and help overcome language and cultural barriers.

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**Appendix A. Questionnaire for the free association experiment**

Sex:

Age:

Status (position):

Date of experiment:

Time 1 (start):

Time 2 (end):

*Write down the response to the following cues. We kindly ask you to respond with the first associated word that comes to your mind.*

use

computer

normal

paper

tact

training

child

cloud

politeness

work