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PURPOSE AND PROSPECTS OF THE PROJECT "MULTILINGUAL ASSOCIATIVE THESAURUS OF POLITENESS"

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Abstract

The study focuses on purpose, objectives and prospects of multilingual associative thesaurus of politeness as a platform for successful intercultural communication. Fundamental novelty of the project is determined by the involvement of respondents from different linguistic cultures. The use of experiments with varying degrees of the respondents' awareness is also an element of novelty. Component and definition analysis reveals the semantic content of the word politeness fixed in lexicographic sources. Free word association data show the strongest verbal links in the speakers' lexicon. The method of mind maps clarifies and supplements the free association data. The analysis of dictionary entries contributes to identifying ethnolinguistic stereotypes of politeness which is relevant for finding the solution to the problem of fixing national and cultural specificity of speakers' mental lexicon and optimization of intercultural communication. It helps create methods of teaching intercultural communication to overcome cultural and linguistic barriers. The identification of ethnolinguistic and cultural stereotypes of politeness contributes to the solution of fundamental problems connected with the correlation of universal, ethnic and individual in the content of the images of the world of speakers who represent different cultures. The project's implementation suggests new ways to eliminate gaps in the field of politeness and intercultural communication in a multilingual society.

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1. Introduction

The study of politeness has become one of the main trends of anthropocentric linguistics. Research in this area was initiated in the 1970-s of the twentieth century. Working on politeness and some universals in language use Brown & Levinson (1987) emphasized that it would be of special value to those interested in linguistic pragmatics, sociolinguistics, applied linguistics, anthropology, and the sociology and social psychology of interaction. Studies dedicated to politeness have been rapidly evolving since then and their relevance in linguistics is still growing (Al-Ghamdi et al., 2019; Al-Mansoob et al., 2019; Alemi & Latifi, 2019; Anderson & Huntington, 2017; Chocron et al., 2020; Haugh & Kádár, 2017; Ismail & Shanmuganathan, 2019; Isosävi, 2020; Masullo Chen & Lu, 2017; Sinkeviciute, 2015). A thorough review of the theory of politeness is presented in the article (Locher & Larina, 2019). Special attention should be paid to studies in the framework of psycholinguistics. The researchers focus on the establishment of the psychologically relevant content of politeness/impoliteness in the speaker's lexicon (Pishchalnikova, 2019; Pishchalnikova & Yao, 2019; Stepykin, 2020).

2. Problem Statement

An important methodological principle of psycholinguistic approach is that word associations are analyzed as speech acts. Comparing the data of a series of free association experiments, the author concludes that the composition of the associative fields indicates a decrease in the relevance of polite behavior strategies (Pishchalnikova, 2019). The project "Multilingual associative thesaurus of politeness" is aimed at ethno-linguistic and cultural stereotypes of politeness on the basis of psychologically real structural and content components of the word politeness in Russian, English, Italian and other languages.

Compiling an associative dictionary starts with selecting the list of cue words. It is necessary to take into account the influence of consecutive cue words on the responses in experiments. The method of generating random numbers can be used for this purpose.

The number of cue words presented to the informant during the experiment may vary from one to infinity. Too many cues can negatively affect the obtained data, since the purpose of the experiment is to get spontaneous responses that first come to one's mind. These reactions reflect the strongest links between words in an individual's mental lexicon.

The location of the experiment can also be different. In some cases, an association experiment is a quick analysis of the laboratory type. However, in some studies, informants participate in the experiment remotely, which is typical of comparative studies. Researchers simply do not have any other way to access the associative verbal network of representatives of another linguistic culture. The association experiment can be performed orally or in the written form, which also affects the obtained data.

Another variable parameter that has a significant impact on the results of the experiment is the age of the respondents. There is evidence to suggest that the responses of adults differ from the children's ones. Some researchers focus on student groups aged 18 to 25 years, since the formation of a language competence is mostly completed by that time. Others investigate children's associations, solving the problem of speech ontogenesis.

The informant's profession and social status should be also taken into account. It has been proved that the responses of people who have different specialties vary.

3. Research Questions

In order to fulfill the project we should answer the following research questions. What are the purpose and objectives of the study? Which methods and procedures can be helpful to implement it? What are the prospects of "Multilingual associative thesaurus of politeness"?

4. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the project is to compile multilingual associative thesaurus of politeness as a platform for integrating language communities.

The research implies certain objectives. It involves presentation of the scientific context of word association method and published association norms. In order to select cues, we are going to use component analysis and association methods. It is also necessary to obtain association data which represent the responses activated by the word cues. Comparative analysis of associative fields related to politeness in different languages contributes to the identification of ethnolinguistic and cultural stereotypes fixed in the speakers' lexicon.

5. Research Methods

To fulfill the project component and definition analysis, free word association method and mind mapping are used. Component and definition analysis reveal the semantic content of the word *politeness* fixed in lexicographic sources. Free word association method contributes to establishing the strongest links that the words have in the speakers' lexicon. Word association responses reflect the first word that comes to the respondents' mind (Playfoot et al., 2016). The method of mind maps (figure 01) is apt for increasing the number of potentially possible communicative situations that the cue word activates. It clarifies and supplements the free association data.

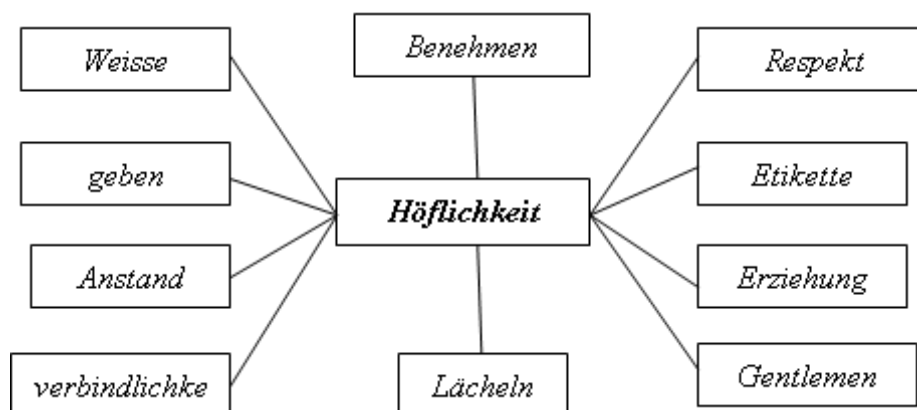


Figure 01. Mind Map "Höflichkeit".

6. Findings

The plan of project implementation can be presented in the following table (see table 1), which reveals the stages of compiling "Multilingual associative thesaurus of politeness".

Table 01. The Plan of Project Implementation

Year	Prospective Actions
2020	Component and definition analysis of the word politeness in Russian, English, Italian and other languages. Selection of cue words for association experiment in different languages. Conducting a series of mutually verifying psycholinguistic experiments
2021	Publishing a multilingual associative thesaurus of politeness. Comparative analysis of the associative fields in Russian, British, Italian, and other linguistic cultures
2022	Identification of universal and specific features of mental representation of politeness. Establishing the ways and strategies of using the results and findings in intercultural communication

The first stage of the project "Multilingual Associative Thesaurus of Politeness" involves the procedure of selecting cues for the prospective dictionary entries. In this article, we are going to clarify this procedure on the material of Italian.

The integrated analysis of lexicographic sources reveals that the word *politeness* in Italian includes the following components: *affabilità* (*affability*), *amabilità* (*amiability*), *attenzione* (*attention*), *carità* (*charity*), *garbo* (*politeness*), *gentilezza* (*kindness*), *favore* (*favour*), *piacere* (*pleasure*), *premura* (*care*), *servizio* (*service*), *boune maniere* (*good manners*), *cavalleria* (*cavalry*), *cordialita* (*cordiality*), *cortesia* (*courtesy*), *disponibilità* (*helpfulness*), *educazione* (*education*), *galanteria* (*gallantry*). Word association is the next step of the procedure. There are two basic types of this method. If the experimenter influences on the choice of the intended response in some way, imposing certain restrictions, we deal with limited or controlled word associations. E.g., according to the instruction the informant is supposed to respond only with nouns, verbs, etc. The idea of free association experiment is not to limit either formal or semantic features of the responses. There might be a single response to the word cue or a word association chain.

In our research we used free association method with a single word response. The experiment was conducted in 2020 and involved 300 participants. Most of them were students of the University of Bologna. Both personal contacts and online forums and chats were used to distribute the questionnaires. The author presented the informants with the word cue *gentilezza* and some other words which had no semantic connection with the cue.

Another method that reveals with a certain degree of objectivity the cultural specificity and semantic connections that are potential for a word as a unit is mind mapping (Buzan & Buzan, 1993). It is based on the theory of radiant thinking. From the angle of American psychologists, every bit of information entering the brain, every sensation, memory, or thought, including every word, number, taste, smell, line, color, rhythmic beat, note, sensation from touching an object can be represented as a central spherical object, from which dozens, hundreds, thousands, and millions of "tentacles" radiate. Each "tentacle" represents an association, and each association has almost infinite links to other associations. The object is displayed in the psyche as a Gestalt that is not just the sum of verbal characteristics. The authors of "Mind Map Book" suppose that thinking can be represented as a large associative machine.

They compare our brain to a super-powerful biocomputer, in which thoughts, like rays, diverge from an almost infinite number of information nodes (Buzan & Buzan, 1993).

The difference between mind maps and word association chains is that a linear form of the chain coarsens the modeling process to some extent, distorting the spontaneity of association process. Each subsequent response can be linked not to the original word cue, but to the previous association. The undeniable advantage of mind maps is that the respondent focuses on the central object. This method helps preserve semantic dominants and contributes to the consistency of responses.

The free association method and mind mapping have different degrees of the respondent's awareness. It is assumed that free associations are spontaneous, i.e. the respondents write the words without thinking. The method of mind maps, on the contrary, is designed to focus on the word cue.

The associations obtained as a result of a free association method reflect the most typical communicative situations which the cue word activates in the respondent's brain. Though associations represent a system of stable meanings, free association experiment reveals a large number of single responses that occur as a result of the individual's experience and fix personal meanings. The method of mind maps allows to identify these personal meanings. It also supplements the free association data. The example of the mind map which was supposed to be filled in by Italian participants is given in figure 02.

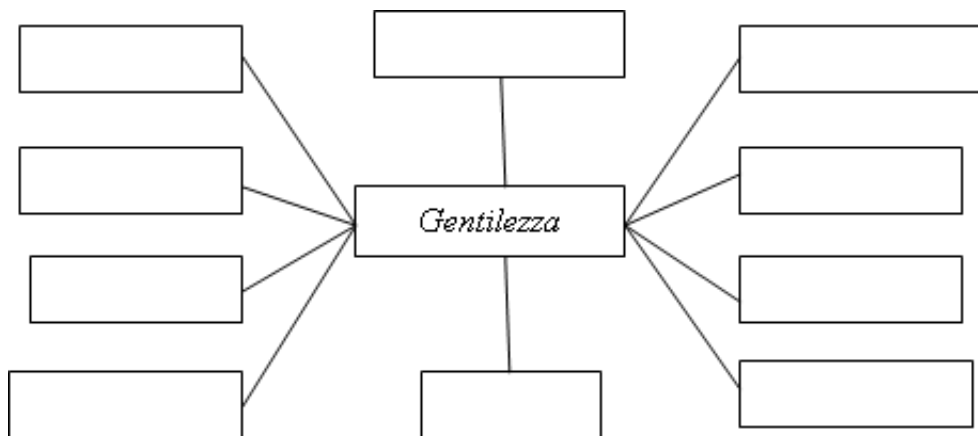


Figure 02. Mind Map "Gentilezza"

After integration of lexicographic and associative data the list of cues for the prospective thesaurus entries was obtained. It includes *accortezza* (shrewdness), *adeguato* (adequate), *affabilità* (affability), *affetto* (love), *affettuosità* (affection), *aiuto* (help), *altruismo* (altruism), *amabile* (lovable), *amabilità* (amiability), *amarezza* (bitterness), *amica* (friend), *amichevole* (friendly), *amicizia* (friendship), *amico* (friend), *amor* (love), *animo* (soul), *antica* (ancient), *antipatico* (obnoxious), *artificioso* (contrived), *ascolto* (listening), *atteggiamento* (attitude), *attenzione* (attention), *attitudine* (attitude), *benessere* (well-being), *bianco* (white), *bon ton* (bon ton), *bontà* (goodness), *buone maniere* (good manners), *buon costume* (morality), *buona disposizione verso gli altri* (good disposition towards others), *buona educazione* (good manners), *cane* (dog), *capacità di ascoltare* (ability to listen), *carezza* (caress), *carineria* (cuteness), *carità* (charity), *cavalleria* (cavalry), *cerbiatto* (fawn), *cerimonioso* (ceremonious), *civile* (civil), *cliente* (customer), *collettività* (community), *comportamento* (behavior), *comprensione* (understanding), *cordialità* (cordiality), *corte* (court), *cortese* (courteous), *cortesia* (courtesy), *d'obbligo*

(*a must*), *delicatezza* (delicacy), *disponibilità* (availability), *dolce stil novo* (new style), *dolcezza* (sweetness), *donata* (donated), *donna anziana* (elderly woman), *donna* (woman), *dovere* (duty), *educazione* (education), *eleganza* (elegance), *empatia* (expressed), *espressa* (empathy), *falsa* (false), *familiare* (familiar), *favore* (favour), *finezza* (finesse), *fiore* (flower), *formalità* (formality), *galante* (gallant), *galanteria* (gallantry), *galateo* (etiquette), *garbo* (grace), *generosità* (generosity), *gentile* (kind), *gentilezza* (kindness), *gentiluomo* (gentleman), *gesto* (gesture), *gradevole* (agreeable), *gratuiuta* (gratitude), *grazia* (grace), *grazie* (thank you), *graziosita* (gracefulness), *innata* (innate), *maniera* (manner), *mano* (hand), *maturità* (maturity), *modo* (manner), *morale* (moral), *morbido* (soft), *naturale* (natural), *negoziante* (shopkeeper), *nobile* (noble), *ordine* (order), *ospitalità* (hospitality), *pacato* (calm), *pensiero* (thought), *per favore* (please), *piacere* (pleasure), *piacevole* (pleasant), *posatezza* (positivity), *positività* (positivity), *pratico* (practical), *precisione* (precision), *pregio* (value), *premura* (thoughtfulness), *premuroso* (thoughtful), *principio* (principle), *propensione* (propensity), *raffinatezza* (refinement), *rapporte* (relationship), *rarietà* (rarity), *richiesta* (request), *riguardo* (regard), *rispetto* (respect), *semplicità* (simplicity), *servile* (servile), *servizio* (service), *sguardo* (look), *sincerità* (sincerity), *sociale* (social), *società* (society), *sorriso* (smile), *spontaneità* (spontaneity), *tempo* (time), *tolleranza* (tolerance), *umanità* (humanity), *umiltà* (humility), *vecchiavvecchietta* (old woman), *vera* (true), *vicino* (close), *virtù innata* (innate virtue), *virtuoso* (virtuous).

The second stage is a free association experiment. It is planned to involve more than 100 participants in the experiment. The obtained data is presented in the following table (see table 2).

Table 02. Responses to the cue word amico

Responses to the cue word amico (friend)	The amount of female responses	The amount of male responses	Total amount of responses
fiducia (trust)	11	3	12
tesoro (treasure)	7	3	8
nemico (enemy)	6	3	7
compagnia (company)	4	3	7
fedeltà (fidelity)	4	3	7
mio (my)	1	3	4
amica (friend)	3	1	4
fedele (faithful)	2	2	4
legame (bond)	2	1	3
gioia (joy)	2	1	3
buono (good)	1	1	2
amore (love)	2		2
lealtà (loyalty)	2		2
Anna	2		2
casa (home)	2		2
caro (dear)	2		2
aiuto (help)	1	1	2
famiglia (family)	2		2
affetto (affection)	2		2
complice (partner in crime)	1	1	2
simpatico (nice)	1	1	2

documentario (documentary)	1	1	2
cane (dog)	2		2
youtube	1	1	2
arte (art)	1		1
cuore (heart)	1		1
felice (happy)	1		1
risate (laughs)	1		1
felicità (happiness)	1		1
uscire (go out)		1	1
bene (well)	1		1
amicizia (friendship)	1		1
fratello (brother)	1		1
migliore (best)	1		1
fraterno (fraternal)	1		1
Mirco	1		1
gioco (game)		1	1
niente (nothing)	1		1
Cinzia	1		1
Sara	1		1
guerra (war)		1	1
Elena	1		1
gustativo (gustatory)	1		1
verde (green)	1		1
ilmioragazzo (my boyfriend)	1		1
infanzia (childhood)	1		1
birra (beer)	1		1
Total	82	32	107

A similar procedure will be used in Russian, English and other languages in order to publish a multilingual associative thesaurus of politeness.

The final stage is dedicated to the comparative analysis of the associative fields in Russian, British, Italian, and other linguistic cultures to identify universal and specific features of mental representation of politeness. This is going to contribute to establishing the ways and strategies of using the findings of the project in intercultural communication.

7. Conclusion

As a result of the project implementation, it is planned to publish multilingual associative thesaurus, which is going to reflect psychologically real stereotypes of politeness typical of the studied language communities. The importance of this edition is determined by the urgent need to find a platform for successful intercultural communication in the period of rude and unfriendly moods in modern society, represented in the language. The analysis of the obtained data can contribute to the problem of correlation of universal, ethnic and individual in the images of the world of speakers related to different cultures. Finding the solution to the problem of fixing and identifying the national and cultural specifics of the language consciousness makes it possible to create methods of teaching intercultural communication in

order to overcome language and cultural barriers. The practical significance of the project is determined by the possibility of applying its results and findings in psycholinguistics, the theory of intercultural communication, historical lexicology, cognitive linguistics, linguoculturology, ethnopsychology, the theory and practice of translation. The project also contributes to the development of free association norms in a multilingual context.

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