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PSYCHOLINGUISTIC MEANINGS OF THE VERBALIZED CONCEPT “HOLY FOOL” (BASED ON THE RESULTS OF THE PSYCHOLINGUISTIC EXPERIMENT)

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Aim of the study. The article presents the results of the research into the verbalized concept “holy fool” in the linguistic world-image of the Russian-speaking population of Ukraine.

Materials and methods. The main method of the conducted research was the psycholinguistic experiment. The sample comprised 204 respondents aged 18-35, males and females being equally represented.

Results. The conducted research resulted in the description of the psycholinguistic meanings of “holy fool”. The experiment showed that the concept “holy fool” in the everyday linguistic consciousness is primarily associated with mental or physical deficiency, which was reflected in three core (more than 15%) psycholinguistic meanings: “strange fellow or old man”, “ugly fellow or old man”, “mentally sick fellow or old man”. Foolishness as “simulated madness” (“for Christ’s sake”) is replaced by natural foolishness in everyday linguistic consciousness. Modern people no longer tend to consider a holy fool to be “a peculiar zealot of piety”. However, this meaning still remains more or less understandable, which is supported by the psycholinguistic meaning “blessed fellow or old man” (14,2%). The word “holy fool” itself is perceived as obsolete by some modern native speakers.

The results of our research confirm the conclusions made by Russian and Ukrainian scholars who analyzed and described the concept “holy fool” in everyday linguistic consciousness, i.e. its ambivalent nature; the peripheral location of the theological associates, most of which reflect a certain type of holiness (“blessed”); singular emotive associates.

On the whole, the core semantics of “holy fool” does not depend on gender. Regardless of gender, respondents evaluate the stimulus both negatively and

positively. 41% of respondents display repulsion to this stimulus "holy fool". Male respondents tend to use rude and obscene lexemes.

As far as the prospect of further research is concerned, there is a need to describe the behavioral pattern of the ludic competence "holy fool" taking into consideration both core and peripheral psycholinguistic meanings of holy fool and actualizing the personified associates that help to build the model of behavior typical of a holy fool.

Keywords: ludic competence, ludic position, holy fool, psycholinguistic experiment, free association experiment, psycholinguistic meaning.

Психолінгвістичні значення вербалізованого концепта «юродивий» (за результатами психолінгвістичного експерименту)

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Мета. Стаття присвячена дослідженню вербалізованого концепту «юродивий» в мовній картині світу російськомовного населення жителів України.

Методи і вибірка. Основним методом виступив психолінгвістичний експеримент. Вибірку склали 204 особи молодого віку (18-35 років) в рівному співвідношенні чоловічої і жіночої статі.

Результати. Підсумком проведеного дослідження став опис психолінгвістичних значень «юродивий». Результати експерименту показали, що концепт «юродивий» в повсякденній мовній свідомості, перш за все, пов'язаний з душевною або тілесною злиденністю, що знайшло своє відображення в трьох ядерних (більше 15%) психолінгвістичних значеннях: «дивний хлопець або старий», «потворний хлопець або старий», «психічно хворий хлопець або старий». Юродство як «уявне божевілля» («Христа ради») в повсякденній мовній свідомості змінюється природним. Розуміння юродивого як «особливого ревнителя благочестя» сучасною людиною поступово втрачається, але так чи інакше все це залишається зрозумілим, що знаходить своє підтвердження в психолінгвістичній значенні «блаженний хлопець або старий» (14,2%). Деякими сучасними носіями мови саме слово «юродивий» сприймається як застаріле. Отримані нами результати знаходять своє підтвердження в роботах як російських, так і вітчизняних вчених, присвячених аналізу і опису сенсу культурного концепту «юродивий» в повсякденній свідомості, який характеризується: амбівалентністю; периферією теологічних асоціатів, велика частина яких відображає тип святості («блаженний»); одиничними емотивними асоціатами. Семантичне наповнення ядра «юродивого» в цілому не залежить від статевої ідентифікації. Для респондентів обох статей характерні позитивні, нейтральні та негативні оцінки стимулу. У 41% респондентів «юродивий» викликає відторгнення. Однак для чоловіків типові грубіші і ненормативні лексеми.

Ключові слова: ігрова компетентність, грайливість, ігрова позиція, юродивий, психолінгвістичний експеримент, вільний асоціативний експеримент, психолінгвістичне значення.

Introduction. The present article continues a series of articles devoted to *ludic competence* (Gordienko-Mytrofanova, 2015; Gordienko-Mytrofanova & Sauta, 2016; Gordienko-Mytrofanova & Kobzieva, 2017; Gordienko-Mytrofanova et al., 2018).

Ludic competence is formed alongside with the development of playfulness, which is a stable personality trait in the modern world of gamification (Gordienko-Mytrofanova & Kobzieva, 2017a, 2017b). Playfulness reveals itself in the way how a person creatively adapts to the reality of one's own "Self" (individual identity) and to the reality of the World (socialization), accepting this task as an exciting challenge.

The components of playfulness as an integral personality trait are also the components of ludic competence. These are defined as "motivated abilities" (Raven, 1994: 5) that help individuals to achieve personally meaningful goals. In this case, the goal is to develop individual identity to the extent which ensures successful socialization.

The present research into playfulness is performed with the help of a psycholinguistic experiment. It is a collective effort of students and PhD students of the department of practical psychology of H. S. Skovoroda Kharkiv National Pedagogical University under the supervision of professor I. V. Gordienko-Mytrofanova. The most extensive free association experiment has been undertaken with the stimulus word "playfulness" (4,795 respondents). 19 psycholinguistic meanings of playfulness were described as a result of the psycholinguistic experiment with a sample of 1,600 respondents (Gordienko-Mytrofanova, 2015; Gordienko-Mytrofanova & Kobzieva, 2017a, 2017b; Gordienko-Mytrofanova & Sauta, 2016b, 2016c).

Relying on the previous theoretical and empirical research into playfulness as a personality trait (Barnett, 2007; Guitard et al., 2005; Staempfli, 2007; Proyer, 2012; Proyer & Ruch, 2011; Yarnal & Qian, 2011; Yue et al., 2016), as well as on the analysis of the outlined components-scales of playfulness (Glynn & Webster, 1992; Tsuji et al., 1996; Schaefer & Greenberg, 1997; Barnett, 2007; Yarnal & Qian, 2011; Proyer, 2012; Shen et al., 2014; Proyer, 2017), high-frequency reactions of the biggest sample of 4,795 respondents, and the established psycholinguistic meanings, we managed to single out the following components of playfulness (Gordienko-Mytrofanova & Kobzieva, 2017a, 2017b; Gordienko-Mytrofanova et al., 2018): "*sensitivity*", "*humor*", "*ease*", "*imagination*", "*flirting*" (as an intention to attract the attention of the opposite or one's own sex), "*mischievousness*" (as a particular example of self-challenge), "*fugue*" (as provocative and/ or eccentric behavior) (Gordienko-Mytrofanova & Sauta, 2016; Gordienko-Mytrofanova &

Kobzieva, 2017a, 2017b; Gordienko-Mytrofanova et al., 2018).

These components formed the basis for the ludic positions of effective social interaction: “sensitiveness” – “Esthete”; “humor” – “Real Humorist”; “ease” – “Balance-master”; “imagination” – “Sculptor”; “flirting” – “Diplomat”; “mischievousness” – “Frolicsome Fellow”; “fugue” – “Holy Fool”. Ludic positions are manifestations of ludic competence in various standard and nonstandard situations, i.e. the behavioral aspect.

Ludic positions are manifestations of ludic competence in various standard and nonstandard situations, i.e. the behavioral aspect.

As it can be seen from here, fugue is one of the components of ludic competence. In the coaching session devoted to ludic competence we considered “fugue” as the *ability to “deliberately pretend to be stupid or insane” which is considered by the players themselves and observed by the other participants of the interaction in order to enhance the feeling of identity.*

Scholars that study playfulness as a personality trait also tend to associate playfulness and fugue, or playfulness and eccentricity: Playfulness Scale for Adults [fun-loving, sense of humor, enjoys silliness, informal, whimsical]: Schaefer C., Greenberg R., 1997; OLIW questionnaire [Other-directed, Lighthearted, Intellectual, and Whimsical playfulness]: Proyer, R. T., 2017.

For the time being, we are aware of only one questionnaire of playfulness where fugue is present as one of the scales of playfulness. This is Five-Factor Personality Questionnaire (FFPQ) developed by Heijiro Tsuji and his colleagues in 1996 (Tsuji et al., 1996). The Japanese scholars adapted the American Five-Factor Personality Questionnaire to the Japanese population, and they also introduced bipolarity of each factor, which, as they believe, helps to characterize an individual in a more comprehensive way, as long as each of the poles of the trait reflects its peculiarity. “Playfulness-Practicality” factor consists of the following facets: curiosity-conservativeness, fantasy-realism, artisticness-inartisticness, inner sensibility-inner insensibility, rigidity-fugue.

The opposition “rigidity” / “fugue” is represented in the following questions:

1. I am a witty person.
2. I think life is a gamble.
3. People often call me strange.
4. I wish I lived in a different world.
5. Sometimes I think I can discover something new in myself.
6. Sometimes I feel as if I am a trickster that plays tricks on people.

As a component of ludic competence, fugue corresponds to a ludic position which is known as “holy fool”. One of the goals of the present

research is to describe the behavioral patterns of ludic positions, in particular, those of the ludic position “Holy Fool”, considering the meanings that reflect the reality of the linguistic consciousness of the native speakers. To this end, free association experiments are conducted with the stimulus words that correspond to the components of ludic competence.

We are aware of other research works conducted by Ukrainian and Russian scholars into the concept “holy fool” with the help of psycholinguistic methods: Yu. Karaulov (Karaulov, 2002) who described the results of free association experiment with a stimulus word “*holy fool*”; N. Chulkina and D. Gomes (Chulkina & Gomes, 2016) who identified and described the ambivalent character of the concept *foolishness for Christ/holy fool* with the help of free association experiment and the method of test associative field; S. Yurkov who described cultural and semiotic functions of the foolishness for Christ phenomenon in Orthodox Christianity (Yurkov, 2008). The scientific papers published by Ukrainian scholars also present the results of the linguistic experiment (Maslii, 2012) and the lexicographic description of the concept *foolishness for Christ/holy fool* (Dolhov, 2014).

Our research into the verbalized concept “*holy fool*” is part of a long-standing research into the stimulus “*holy fool*” which we have been conducting since 2015. It is a collective research effort of I. Gordienko-Myrofanova, S. Sauta, A. Silina, Yu. Kobzieva undertaken on the basis of the department of practical psychology of H. S. Skovoroda Kharkiv National Pedagogical University.

Aim and objectives. The aim of the present paper is to use the method of applied psycholinguistic experiment in order to describe the psycholinguistic meanings of the verbalized concept “holy fool” in the linguistic world-image of the Russian-speaking population of Eastern Ukraine.

As it was mentioned above, the results will be applied later to describe the behavioral pattern of the ludic position “Holy Fool”, into considerations the meanings that reflect the reality of the linguistic consciousness of Russian native speakers.

In accordance with the aim of the research, the following objectives were outlined: to define the general and specific features of the verbal behavior of young respondents in the framework of studying the stimulus word “holy fool”; to suggest major strategies and methods for describing the psycholinguistic meanings of the verbalized concept “*holy fool*”.

Research methods. The main method of the conducted research is the psycholinguistic experiment, whose main stage was the free association experiment with the word-stimulus “holy fool”. As additional methods,

surveys (in order to refine the results of the free association experiment) and questioning (in order to specify the characteristics of the sample) have been applied. As a mathematical-statistical method to analyse the results of the research, frequency and cluster analysis was used, which allowed us to identify tendencies in the distribution of associations produced by the experimental group.

The free association experiment with the stimulus word "*holy fool*" was conducted in the written form. According to the instruction, the respondents were supposed to state their gender, age, education/specialization, occupation/position, marital status, and write down first five words that occurred to them and that were somehow associated with "*holy fool*" ("*юродивий*").

The total number of respondents who took part in the experiments was 204 young people (18-35), males and females being equally represented. As far as the education criterion is concerned, 51.5% had not fully completed their university education, 36.7% of the respondents had a university degree; 9.3% – secondary education, 2.5% – did not indicate their educational background. As far as the marital status is concerned, 19% of the respondents were married, 77.6% were single, 7% were in some sort of relationship, 1% – were divorced, 1% were engaged; 3.4% did not indicate their marital status.

Research results

1. Associative fields for five reactions and for the first reaction. The results of the frequency analysis of the free association experiment with the stimulus word "*holy fool*" enabled us to build the associative fields for five reactions, as well as for the first reaction. 979 reactions were produced by the respondents to the stimulus word "*holy fool*" (the results of the free association experiment were processed for the first five reactions). 519 reactions out of these were unique reactions, including 41 word combinations or complete sentences, 166 reactions with the frequency higher than 1, 353 individual reactions, and 0 refusals, 2 – did not know the meaning of the word.

As far as the first reaction is concerned, the results of the free association experiment with the stimulus word "*holy fool*" yielded 204 associations. 108 reactions out of these were unique reactions, including 11 word combinations or complete sentences, 33 reactions with the frequency higher than 1, 75 individual reactions, and 0 refusals, 2 – did not know the meaning of the word.

The comparative analysis of the associative fields (for five reactions and for the first reaction) prompted a conclusion that the scope and the nature of the reactions have not considerably changed (see fig. 1).

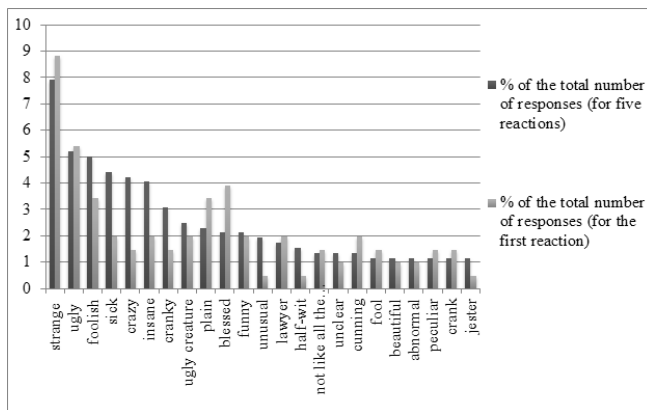


Fig. 1. The results of the comparative analysis of the associative fields for the first and for five reactions to the stimulus word “holy fool”

What has changed, though, is the sequence of reactions, as well as the quantity of peripheral and individual reactions. The latter can be easily explained, as the increase in the number of respondents causes the increase in the number of individual reactions that reflect individual meanings generated by the respondents.

The following reactions occur in the associative field for five reactions: *madman, pauper* 5 (0,96%), *another, awkward, lunatic, religion, wise, Yura* 4 (0,77%), *a cripple, dushbag, family, happy, honest, irresponsible, lame-brained, legal, Pakhom, prophet, reckless, repulsive, truth* 3 (0,58%), *blockhead, born, butt of the joke, butthead, deviation, different from everybody else, disadvantaged, distinguished, freak, G. Márquez, hermit, humpbacked, idiot, infantile, inferior, interesting, laughter, limited, marvelous, mean, naïve, non-standard, old, outcast, poor, Quasimodo, seer, slanting, slowpoke, The Old Man and the Sea, unhappy, verity, wanker, Whipping top, yellow, Young man* 2 (0,38%).

However, it should be mentioned that the associative field for five reactions contains a lexeme with intellectual semantics, i.e. “wise” 4 (0.77%), whereas the associative field for the first reaction primarily contains associates that refer to some sort of intellectual deficiency (*foolish, fool, crazy, insane, mentally challenged, loony, feeble-minded, stupid*), with only one exception, which is a singular reaction “educated”.

The associative field for five reactions also shows some meanings of the word “*holy fool*” that are not present in the associative field for the first reaction. These are “*prophet*” 5 (0.96%) (*prophet* 3 (0.58%), *seer* 2 (0.38%)) and “*hermit*” 2 (0.38%).

Besides, the associative field for five reactions helped to single out respondents that do not know the meaning of the stimulus word in focus. For

instance, it was found out that 4 people did not know the meaning of the word “holy fool” even “approximately”.

Table 1

№	Associates	Total	%	Females total	% of females	Males total	% of males
1.	strange [strange 18, peculiarity 1]	19	931	12	11.76	7	6.86
2.	ugly [ugly 11, ugly creature 4]	15	735	3	2.94	12	11.76
3.	crank [crank 3, cranky 3, weird 4]	10	49	10	9.8	0	0
	foolish [foolish 7, simple-minded, stupidity 1]	9	4.41	3	2.94	6	5.88
	blessed	8	3.92	4	3.92	4	3.92
	plain	8	3.92	7	6.86	1	0.98
7.	lawyer [lawyer 4, legal 3]	7	3.43	1	0.98	6	5.88
8.	insane [insane 4, insane people 1]	5	2.45	3	2.94	2	1.96
9.	cunning	4	1.96	1	0.98	3	2.94
10.	fool [fool 3, half-wit 1]	4	1.96	0	0	4	3.92
	funny	4	1.96	2	1.96	2	1.96
	sick	4	1.96	2	1.96	2	1.96
13.	Ancient Rus [Ancient Rus 2, Russian]	3	1.47	1	0.98	2	1.96
	crazy	3	1.47	1	0.98	2	1.96
15.	crippled	3	1.47	2	1.96	1	0.98
16.	not like all the others	3	1.47	1	0.98	2	1.96
17.	peculiar	3	1.47	3	2.94	0	0
18.	abnormal	2	0.98	1	0.98	1	0.98
19.	amazing	2	0.98	1	0.98	1	0.98
20.	amusing	2	0.98	1	0.98	1	0.98
21.	beautiful	2	0.98	1	0.98	1	0.98
22.	fearful	2	0.98	1	0.98	1	0.98
23.	fellow	2	0.98	0	0	2	1.96
24.	God [God, godlike 1]	2	0.98	1	0.98	1	0.98
25.	joyful	2	0.98	1	0.98	1	0.98
26.	mentally challenged	2	0.98	0	0	2	1.96
	saint	2	0.98	2	1.96	0	0
28.	unclear	2	0.98	1	0.98	1	0.98
29.	wrong	2	0.98	1	0.98	1	0.98

2. Partial semic interpretation of the results of the frequency analysis in the course of the free association experiment with the stimulus word “holy fool” according to the first reaction. Afterwards, we conducted partial semic interpretation of the results of the frequency analysis within the framework of free association experiment with the stimulus word “*holy fool*” according to the first reaction.

The analysis of the data received in the course of partial semic interpretation resulted in the change of the sequence of some high frequency associates in comparison with the reactions. However, the composition and the nature of associations remained the same (see Table 1). Singular reactions that are not included in table 1 are described below.

3. The general and specific features of the verbal behavior of young respondents. Partial semic interpretation helped to reveal the general and specific features of the verbal behavior of young respondents (see Table 1). The general features of the verbal behavior of young respondents are reflected in the following lexemes (produced both by male and female respondents): “*strange*” (18 (8.82%)), “*ugly*” (11 (5.39%)), “*blessed*” (8 (3.92%)), “*foolish*” (7 (3.43%)), “*insane*”, “*sick*”, “*funny*”, “*cunning*” (4 (1.96%)), “*not like all the others*”, “*crazy*” (3 (1.47%)), “*joyful*”, “*amazing*”, “*amusing*”, “*beautiful*”, “*unclear*” (2 (0.98%)) (see fig. 2).

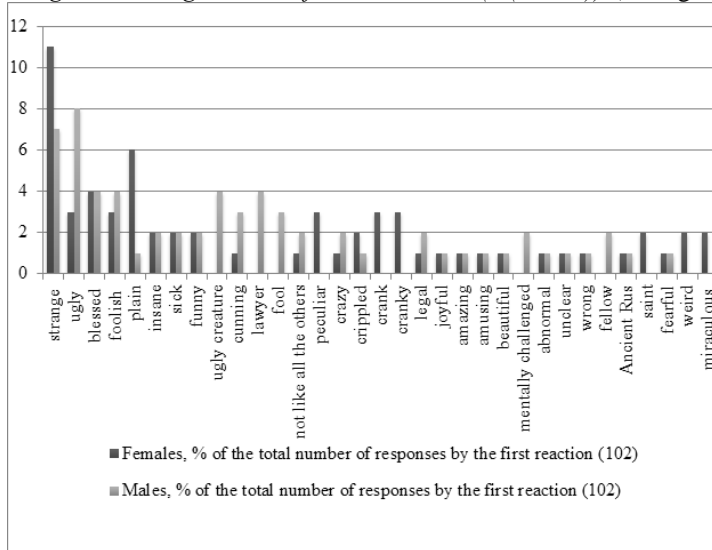


Fig. 2. The results of the comparative analysis of male and female associative fields of the stimulus “holy fool”

The associates listed above reflect the ambivalent nature of the concept “*holy fool*” which is expressed both in negative and positive definitions of “*holy fool*”.

“Male” and “female” associative fields for the stimulus word “*holy fool*” were built in order to identify the specific features of the verbal behavior of respondents by their gender. The reason for considering certain specific features to be characteristic of female or male respondents was the absence of the corresponding lexemes in the “female”/“male” associative fields or the significant difference in the frequency of these lexemes.

For example, female specific features are represented in such lexemes as “*crank*”(4.9%/0%), “*plain*” (3.43%/0.49%), “*peculiar*” (1.47%/0%), “*saint*” (0.98%/0%); the figure after the slash referring to the frequency of these reactions for male respondents.

Male specific features are represented in such lexemes as: “*crank*”(5.88%/1.47%), “*lawyer*” (2.94%/0.49%), “*fool*” (1.96%/0%), “*mentally challenged*”, “*fellow*” (0.98%/0%); the figure after the slash referring to the frequency of these reactions for female respondents.

As it can be seen, male respondents tend to have an explicitly negative attitude to holy fools. It can be assumed that men’s aversion to holy fools is connected with deliberate violation of the accepted norms of behavior. Female reactions, on the other hand, reflect a sacred attitude to holy fools.

4. The peripheral and individual reactions. On the next stage of the research we analyzed peripheral and individual reactions. Singular reactions that only occurred in the male associative field that reflected individual meanings of the respondents are the following: *asocial, Bible, Ceasar, church, crooked, cross, desman, devil, devious, dictionary, dirty, dorky, Dostoevsky, educated, enlightenment, gypsy, hard, inhumanity, insult, loony, ludicrous, Old Russian, Orthodox Christianity, refined, restroom, secretive, shitty, spacey, stupid, weak, white crow, wry.*

As for singular reactions that occurred solely in the female associative field, these are: *a boy born to a poor family, ancient, attractive, broken leg, careless, circus, courage, creepy, curly, cute, different, false, fearless, feeble-minded, horse, inadequate, jester, Judas, lame, Mark, Middle Ages, Old man, original, outsider, playful, poor man, possessed, sincere, small, stupid illiterate thug, uncustomary, unlike others, unpredictable, unusual.*

The analysis of peripheral associates and associates from the extreme periphery enabled us to outline the following semantic groups: “LAWYER” (professional background); “Ancient Rus” (territorial origin and time of appearance); age-related associates(fellow; old man; a boy born to a poor family), “HARD”(emotive associates). Peripheral and singular reactions significantly expand the behavioral cluster involving the following

subgroups (less than 4%) – “CUNNING”, “PECULIAR”, “WRONG”, “FEARLESS”, “EDUCATED”, “SINCERE”, as well as the cluster of “appearance, looks” involving the following subgroups (less than 3%) “POOR MAN”, “HANDSOME”, “DIRTY”.

The response given by one of the male respondents showed that the very word “holy fool” is perceived as an insult (meaning “INSULT”).

5. Semantic clusters of the verbalized concept “holy fool”. The results of the cluster analysis are described in the paper written by I. Gordiienko-Myrofanova and Yu. Kobzieva “The concept “holy fool” in the linguistic world-image of the Russian-speaking population of Ukraine” (the article is in press). The cluster analysis showed that the core of the verbalized concept “*holy fool*” is represented in three semantic clusters: “**behavior**” (46.57%); “**appearance, looks**” (21.57%); “**cognitive disorders**” (16.67%).

6. Negative reactions. Having counted the negative reactions, a conclusion can be made that 41% of respondents react negatively to the word “holy fool”: *ugly 11, foolish, plain 7, insane, sick, ugly creature 4, fool, crazy, crippled 3, mentally challenged, abnormal, wrong, fearful 2, asocial, poor man, insane people, inhumanity, possessed, stupid illiterate thug, simple-minded, stupidity, dirty, half-wit, devious, Judas, wry, false, inadequate, loony, ludicrous, careless, insult, broken leg, crooked, feeble-minded, weal, creepy, stupid, hard, shitty, lame, dorky, devil 1.*

7. Psycholinguistic meanings of the word “holy fool”. The final outcome of the research was the description of the psycholinguistic meanings of the word “holy fool” According to I. Sternin, the psycholinguistic meaning can be rightly considered as the most adequate and realistic model of the systemic meaning of the word which reflects the reality of the linguistic consciousness of native speakers (Sternin, 2011: 188). The algorithm of describing psycholinguistic meanings is thoroughly explained in our publications:

Holy Fool (204 respondents).

Semantic interpretation of the results of the experiment produced the following results.

1. **STRANGE** 41(*strange 18, peculiarity 1, crank 3, cranky 3, weird 4, not like all the others 3, unclear 2, white crow, different, ludicrous, spacey, unusual, uncustomary, unlike others 1*) **FELLOW** 2 or **OLD MAN** 1; can seem **FUNNY** 11(*funny 4, joyful, amusing 2, playful, circus, jester 1*); **CUNNING** 8 (*cunning 4, devious, false, secretive, gypsy 1*) as a **DEVIL** 1; **PECULIAR** 7 (*peculiar 3, miraculous 2, refined, original 1*); **CARELESS** 1; **UNPREDICTABLE** 1; **WRONG** 4(*wrong 2, asocial,*

inadequate 1); such kind of behavior is typical of a **LAWYER**⁷ (*lawyer 4, legal 3*) and some famous people **-DOSTOEVSKY 1, JUDAS 1, MARK 1, CEASAR 1**. Cumulative index of brightness 88.

2. **UGLY**¹⁵ (*ugly 11, ugly creature 4*) **FELLOW 2** or **OLDMAN 1** that has **PLAIN 13** (*plain 8, fearful 2, wrong, creepy, shitty 1*) appearance or **CRIPPLED 3 – WRY, CROOKED**, with a **BROKEN LEG, SMALL, WEAK 1**; his life is **HARD 1**. Cumulative index of brightness 40.

3. mentally **SICK 5** (*sick 4, lame 1*) **FELLOW 2** or **OLDMAN 1: FOOLISH 17** (*foolish (masculine form) 7, simple-minded, foolish (feminine form), stupid illiterate thug 1, fool 3, half-wit 1, loony, mentally challenged, stupid 1*); **INSANE 11** (*insane 5 [insane 4, insane people 1], crazy 3, abnormal 2, possessed 1*); **FEEBLE-MINDED 1**. Cumulative index of brightness 37.

4. **BLESSED 17** (*blessed 8 (God 2 [God, godlike 1], saint 2, Bible, cross, Orthodox Christianity, enlightenment, church 1)*) **FELLOW 2** or **OLDMAN 1** of **OLD RUSSIAN ORIGIN 6** (*Ancient Rus 3 [Ancient Rus 2, Russian], Old Russian, ancient, Middle Ages 1*): **EDUCATED 1, SINCERE 1, FEARLESS 1**. Cumulative index of brightness 29.

5. **Indirect meaning. CRIPPLED 4** (*crippled 3, poorman 1*), **DIRTY 1** (*dirty 1*) **FELLOW 2** or **OLDMAN 1**, or **CUTE 3** (*cute, handsome, attractive 1*), **CURLY 1 BOY BORN TO A POOR FAMILY 1**. Cumulative index of brightness 13.

6. **INSULT 1**. Cumulative index of brightness 1.

The word is not relevant for the linguistic consciousness – 2 respondents. Only two out of 204 respondents said, “I have no idea what it is” and “What does that mean after all?”

Reactions that defy interpretation (4 respondents): associates that describe the outer world (animals, objects): **animals-associates: desman, horse 1 – 2** (0.98%), f. 1 (0.49%), m. 1 (0.49%); **things-associates: restroom, dictionary 1 – 2** (0.98%), m.

Discussion. The psycholinguistic meanings of the verbalized concept “*holy fool*” that have been described above reveal its ambivalent character. The contradictory nature of this concept is confirmed in the works of Russian scholars– Yu. N. Karaulov, G. A. Cherkasova, N. V. Ufimtseva, Yu. A. Sorokin, Ye. F. Tarasov (Karaulov et al., 2002), N. L. Chulkina, D. V. B. Gomes (Chulkina & Gomes, 2016), as well as in the work of Ukrainian researcher Ye. Maslii (Maslii, 2012). As supposed by N. Chulkina, the ambivalence of the concept “*holy fool*” is caused by the fact that there are two types of foolishness for Christ. One of them refers to people suffering from mental deficiency, i.e. natural foolishness. The other type

refers to those who embarked on the way of “voluntary martyrdom” on their free will. Having consciously accepted homelessness and poverty, these people demonstrate “simulated madness” and by doing so they gain the right to “condemn the haughty and vain world”, no matter who they are talking to. This is voluntary foolishness for Christ’s sake (Chulkina & Gomes, 2016; Panchenko, 2000: 337).

The contradictory attitude to *holy fool* is also reflected in the polarity of the way it is evaluated, i.e. it triggers not only “negative” (see p. 6 above), but also “positive” reactions: *amazing, handsome 2, joyful, refined, cute, attractive, educated, original 1* etc. The highest evaluation of foolishness for Christ, which was “wise”, was found in the associative field built on the basis of five reactions.

It should be mentioned here that the Russian-speaking respondents from Eastern Ukraine and representatives of Russian linguistic culture tend to evaluate this concept in three different ways: positive, negative, and neutral. Their percentage demonstrates the predominance of neutral reactions (Karaulov et al., 2002: 744; Chulkina & Gomes, 2016: 299; Maslii, 2012).

The results of the cumulative index of brightness showed that the word “*holy fool*” is perceived by some modern Russian native speakers as obsolete: *Ancient Rus 2, ancient, Old Russian, Russian, Middle Ages 1*.

The presence of singular reactions that defy interpretation (*desman, horse, dictionary, restroom*) may be explained by the fact that a small number of respondents (1.96%) do not know the meaning of this word.

One of the respondents considered the word *holy fool* to be insulting, which was reflected in the reactions *insult*.

1.96% of respondents tend to verbalize *holy fool* with the help of personification: *Dostoevsky, Caesar, Judas, Mark 1*. According to Ye. Maslii, whose opinion we totally share, in this situation “what matters is not the ontological characteristics, but the figurative analogy that helps to describe behavioral strategies: being spectacular, eccentric, provocative, aggressive...” (Maslii, 2012).

In our research, as well as in the works of other scholars who have analyzed the concept “*holy fool*”, theological associates appear on the periphery: *blessed 8, saint 2, Bible, God, godlike, cross, Orthodox Christianity, enlightenment, church, devil 1*. It testifies to the fact that modern people no longer tend to understand the phenomenon of *holy fool* as something connected with “aspiration for Christ’s sake (for the sake of some higher truth)” (Maslii, 2012: 102).

Emotive associates, both in our research (*hard*), as well as in some other works, are represented by extreme periphery.

It is worth paying attention to the fact that unlike the empirical data obtained by the abovementioned scholars, the associative field for the first reaction in our sample does not contain reactions that reflect the prophetic gift of the *holy fool*. There is only some indirect indication of this fact in the theological associates. However, as it has been stated above, reactions of this sort (*seer, prophet*) are present in the associative field for five reactions.

Besides, our research enabled us to analyze “male” and “female” associative fields of the stimulus “*holy fool*”. Regardless of gender, respondents evaluate the stimulus both negatively and positively. However, men are more likely to react with rude and obscene lexemes: *ugly creature, fool, mentally challenged, loony, stupid, shitty, dorky*. On the contrary, women tend to use more lofty vocabulary for positive evaluations: *handsome, cute, attractive, educated, sincere, miraculous, refined, original, fearless, joyful*, etc.

The core semantics of the word “*holy fool*” does not generally depend on the gender. The semantic groups in the extreme periphery, however, are represented by reactions produced either by male or female respondents, which testifies to certain gender-related preferences in the word usage for the stimulus “*holy fool*”. For example, the financial situation of the holy fool (“**POOR MAN**”) is only reflected in female reactions in the extreme periphery, while unkempt appearance is reflected in one singular male reaction (“**DIRTY**”). Emotive associates are represented by one singular male reaction “**HARD**”. Besides, it is worth mentioning that female and male respondents tend to associate the holy fool with different age groups: an old man or a young fellow, respectively.

Conclusions. The main goal of the present psycholinguistic research was to describe the psycholinguistic meanings of the verbalized concept “*holy fool*” in the linguistic world-image of the Russian-speaking population of Eastern Ukraine.

The results of the psycholinguistic experiment showed that in everyday linguistic consciousness the verbalized concept “*holy fool*” is associated with mental or physical deficiency, which is reflected in three core (more than 10%) psycholinguistic meanings: “**strange fellow or old man**” (43%); “**ugly fellow or old man**” (19,6%); “**mentally sick fellow or old man**” (18%).

Therefore, foolishness “for Christ’s sake” (“simulated madness”) is replaced by natural foolishness in everyday linguistic consciousness. Modern people no longer consider holy fool to be somebody who is *truly wise*, who “*deliberately acts like a madman*” while remaining in his right

mind and who becomes a *peculiar zealot of piety*, whose duty is to “*blame this world*” and “*condemn the sins of the strong and the weak paying no heed to social conventions*” (Kovalevskii, 2013: 6-17; Panchenko, 2000: 338-339). This “approximate” understanding of the holy fool is reflected in the peripheral psycholinguistic meaning “**blessed fellow or old man of old Russian origin**”(14%).

Nevertheless, as it was pointed out by Ye. Maslii, the modern world still needs the model of foolish behavior, which was created by culture as a “need for foolishness” (Maslii, 2012: 102). In our research, this model is reflected in the meaning “**strange fellow or old man**” that comprises personified associates.

On the whole, the results of our research confirm the conclusions made by Russian and Ukrainian scholars who analyzed and described cultural concepts and the concept “*holy fool*” in particular, which is ambivalent and has a small number of theological and emotive associates. The word “*holy fool*” itself is perceived as obsolete by some modern native speakers. The core semantics of the “*holy fool*” concept does not depend on gender.

It is also worth mentioning that within the framework of research into the meanings of cultural concepts where everyday consciousness is particularly important, the free association experiment based on five reactions helps to reveal respondents that do not know the meaning of the concept in focus even “approximately”.

As far as the prospect of further research is concerned, there is a need to describe the behavioral pattern of the ludic competence “*holy fool*” taking into consideration both core and peripheral psycholinguistic meanings of *holy fool* and actualizing the personified associates that help to build the model of behavior typical of a holy fool.

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