

## Investigating the Concept of «Flirting» as Reflected in the Russian-Speaking Ukrainians' Linguistic Consciousness\*

### Концепт «флірт» у мовній свідомості російськомовного населення України\*\*

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### **ABSTRACT**

**Purpose.** *The purpose of this study is to define and describe the semantic components of the verbalised concept «flirting» as a component of ludic competence in the linguistic consciousness of the Russian-speaking people from Eastern Ukraine.*

**Methods.** *The main method of the research was a psycholinguistic experiment. The sample comprised 400 young people (aged 18–35), males and females being equally represented.*

**Results.** *The experiment results proved that the concept «flirting» in the linguistic consciousness of the Russian-speaking population of Ukraine is represented by four core semantic clusters: «verbal and nonverbal means of communication» (27.75%), «forms and types of interaction» (25.25%), «emotions, feelings, states» (24.75%), and «gender» (10.5%). The peripheral clusters «romantic relationship» (4.0%) and «meeting place» (1.5%) are represented by a relatively equal number of male and female reactions. The fact that clusters on the extreme periphery are exclusively represented either by female («secret actions») or male reactions («time of year») is most probably explained by certain individual preferences in usage rather than by gender-specific tendencies. The analysis of isolated reactions allowed distinguishing the following cluster reactions: «age» (youth), «period of time» (temporality) and «time of day» (it is getting late).*

*The associative behaviour of the respondents is characterized by a heterosexual orientation of flirting, which is reflected in the peripheral subcluster «heterosexuality» (1.25%).*

**Conclusions.** *Based on the results of cluster analysis, two psycholinguistic meanings of the concept of «flirting» were described: 1. A type of courtship that does not involve sexual intimacy (90.75%) and 2. Sexual relations (4.5%).*

*The semantic content of the concept core of «flirting» does not depend on gender identification based on the results of the analysis of female and male associative fields. The attitude of informants to the stimulus of «flirting» is emotionally positive and is characterized by positive evaluation.*

*The comparative analysis of the verbalised concept «flirting» in the linguistic consciousness of Russian-speaking population of Ukraine and people who live in Russia revealed a wider semantic scope and prominent positive attitude to the stimulus of Ukrainian sample. In general, the evaluation of this phenomenon by Russian-speaking*

respondents in Ukraine and members of the Russian linguistic culture is presented mainly by positive and neutral reactions.

**Key words:** ludic competence, playfulness, ludic position, flirting, psycholinguistic experiment, free word association test, linguistic consciousness, youth.

## Introduction

This article continues a series of studies devoted to *ludic competence/ playfulness* (Kobzieva et al., 2020), and one of its components is *flirting*.

We define ludic competence as a system of inner resources to which a person turns in order to balance their personality against external conditions of the social environment on the basis of positive emotions, interest and joy, which are frequently expressed affectively and accompanied by tension and excitement. Ludic competence is formed alongside with the development of *playfulness*, which is a stable personality trait, which we define as the individual creative adaptation to the reality of their own «Self» (individual identity) and to the reality of the World (social identity): every difficult situation can be faced as a challenge rather than a threat.

In the previous studies we published the findings of the most extensive free association test with the stimulus word *playfulness* (Kobzieva, 2020: 224), theoretically and experimentally explained the way we formed our sample groups quantitatively and qualitatively, and verified the components of playfulness and corresponding ludic positions\* by means of psycholinguistic experiment: «*sensitivity*» (*sensitive*) – «Empath; «*imagination*» (*imaginative*) – «Sculptor»; «*ease*» (*easy*) – «balance-master»; «*flirting*» (*flirtatious*) – «Diplomat»; «*impishness*» (*impish*) – «Frolicsome fellow»; «*humour*» (*funny*) – «Real humourist»; «*fugue*» (*fugue*) – «Holy fool» (Gordienko-Mytrofanova & Kobzieva, 2017).

As a psychological phenomenon *flirting* and its certain aspects are covered in the works of E. Berne as *a kind of light game, which implies*

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\* The names of ludic positions are justified both theoretically and empirically and were tested during coaching sessions in ludic competence, which are part of the curriculum of psychology students in H.S. Skovoroda Kharkiv National Pedagogical University.

*presence of a double secret interaction of ego states* (Berne, 2017) and in the works of Gangestad, as *a negotiation process* that takes place after an initial contribution (Rodgers, 1999). Hall (2013) identified *5 styles of flirting*, Henningsen, Braz, and Davies (2008) determined *6 motives of flirting*, Watzlawick (1983) defined 30 steps of flirting, «from the first eye contact to sex»; Givens (1978) and Whitty (2003) described non-verbal cues for flirting.

But since the subject of our research is ludic competence / playfulness and its components, we are especially interested in the studies where a close relationship of *flirting* and playfulness is shown, and playfulness is considered a highly desirable trait in potential long-term partner and romantic relationships (Chick, Yarnal & Purrington, 2012). Starting with the study of Woll (1989), playfulness is associated with different styles of sexual behaviour, certain types of affection and love, as a spontaneous, idiosyncratic «private game» aimed at stabilizing family relationship, as an important personality trait in particular when choosing a potential partner for romantic relationship (Lauer & Lauer, 2002; Fredrickson, 2003; Weber & Ruch, 2012) and in general as an evolutionarily significant characteristic when choosing a sexual partner (Chick, Yarnal & Purrington, 2012; Proyer & Wagner, 2015).

In foreign playfulness questionnaires which we know, *flirting* was not distinguished as a particular scale but some of its manifestations were defined. For example, relaxedness and focus on other are present in such diagnostic techniques as *Playfulness Scale for Young Adults* (Barnett, 2007); *Adult Playfulness Trait Scale* (Shen, Chick & Zinn, 2014); *Other-directed, Lighthearted, Intellectual, and Whimsical playfulness* (Proyer, 2017).

*Flirting* as an individual scale of ludic competence/playfulness was singled out in the structure of LUDIC COMPETENCE QUESTIONNAIRE (LCQ) developed in terms of psycholinguistics by Kobzieva, Gordienko-Mytrofanova, Zuiev, and Sauta (2019). Factor analysis revealed two latent factors of playfulness and one of them, *Creative communicative susceptibility*, comprises the following components: *flirting*, *sensitivity* and *imagination*. The content of this factor reflects exclusively adult playfulness, the state of Adult (mature personality) in the terminology of E. Berne. In general, it concerns good command of verbal and non-verbal communication, freedom and creative spontaneity in difficult situations, and, in particular, well-developed skills

of adaptability and self-adjustment. The latter provide quick assessment of a situation avoiding frustration and tension of Other without fear to make non-standard decisions – «to play with the situation». But «playing with the situation» always involves maintaining a balance of directness (sincerity) and courtesy (politeness), which is expressed in adequate verbalization of interests and expectations, in terms of positive psychotherapy\* (Pezeshkian, 2006: 34). The questionnaire validation revealed that *flirting* as a scale of Playfulness has a strong positive connection with the scales of emotional intelligence: «Managing your feelings and emotions», «Controlling feelings and emotions of others», «Consciousness of feelings and emotions of others»; self-actualization: «Temporal orientation», «Values of self-actualization», «Cognitive need», «Creativity», «Rapport», and «Flexibility of communication»; and «Affiliative style of humour» (Kobzieva et al., 2019).

In the frame of our ludic competence coaching sessions we consider *flirting* as *the ability to take attention and get on the right side of somebody of the same or the opposite gender through verbal and non-verbal communication in order to establish and maintain mutually beneficial relationships based on the feeling of emotional bond; «to promote» Other in the desired direction* (Gordiienko-Mytrofanova, Kobzieva & Sauta, 2020).

In our ludic competence coaching sessions primarily the results of the psycholinguistic experiment are in active use. They help us consider: gender-specific differences in the perception of the stimulus «*flirting*», emotional and evaluative attitude to it, important meanings of «*flirting*» for the linguistic consciousness of the Russian-speaking population of Ukraine, etc.

## Methodology of Empirical Research

**The aim of the present article** is to use the method of applied psycholinguistic research to define semantic components of the verbalised concept «*flirting*» in the *linguistic consciousness* of young Russian-speaking people living in Ukraine.

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\* Courtesy means the ability to be considerate, to obey and to say «Yes» at the cost of intuitive refusal and an emotional response of fear. Directness as the ability to frankly express needs, stand up for oneself and assert oneself determines the associated risk of aggression.

In accordance with target mission the following objectives were outlined: to determine general features of the *verbal behaviour*\* of young respondents in the framework of studying the verbalised concept «*flirting*»; to suggest major strategies and ways of dividing associations triggered by the stimulus «*flirting*» into semantic groups.

## **Methods and Techniques of the Research**

The method of the given research is a psycholinguistic experiment, whose major part is the free association test with the stimulus word «*flirting*». As additional methods, we used surveys (to refine the results of the free association test) and questionnaires (to specify the characteristics of the sample). As a mathematical-statistical method for the analysis of the results, we used frequency and cluster analysis allowing us to identify tendencies in the distribution of associations expressed by the experimental group.

The free association test with the stimulus word «*flirting*» was conducted in a written form. Respondents were instructed to state their gender, age, education/specialisation, marital status, and write down the first five words that came to their minds somehow associated with the word «*flirting*».

## **Participants**

The total number of respondents was 400 young people (age 18–35), males and females equally represented. By education, 24 per cent were undergraduates, 58 per cent had a university degree, 18 per cent completed secondary school education; by marital status, 24 per cent were married, 76 per cent were single.

## **Ethical Standards**

The authors ensure that the study has been carried out in accordance with The Code of Ethics of the World Medical Association

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\* In the framework of our research, verbal behaviour is applied in a rather limited way, as written reactions to the stimulus words, i.e. it is synonymous to the term «associative behaviour».

(Declaration of Helsinki) for experiments involving humans; approved by the local institutional review board (protocol № 12 of the Department of Psychology of H.S. Skovoroda Kharkiv National Pedagogical University, 23.05.2018). Written informed consent was obtained from all participants.

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The authors have no conflicts of interest to disclose.

## Results

In accordance with the objectives of the study, the results of a free associative test were processed according to the algorithm for describing psycholinguistic meaning, developed by I.A. Sternin (2011), which provides the following:

### **(1) Building associative fields by five reactions and by the first reaction.**

Frequency analysis of the free association test with the stimulus word *«flirting»* enabled us to build associative fields by five reactions and by the first reaction. A total of 1991 reactions were expressed by the respondents (the results of the free association test by five reactions). Out of these, 467 reactions were unique\*, including 77 word combinations or complete sentences; 1710 reactions with a frequency greater than one; 281 isolated cases\*\*; 0 declined to answer the question.

As far as the first reaction is concerned, the free association test with the stimulus word *«flirting»* yielded 400 associations, of which 102 reactions were unique, including 12 word combinations; 52 reactions with a frequency greater than one, 50 isolated cases, 0 declined to answer the question.

The comparative analysis of the associative fields (by the first and by five reactions) prompted the conclusion that the composition and nature of reactions had not changed significantly. What has changed, however, is the sequence of high-frequency reactions (cf. Figure 1), as well as the quantity of peripheral reactions and isolated cases. The latter can be easily explained by the greater number of respondents.

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\* Unique reactions are reactions expressed with different lexemes (Karaulov et al., 2002a).

\*\* Isolated cases are reactions with a frequency that equals 1 (Karaulov et al., 2002a).

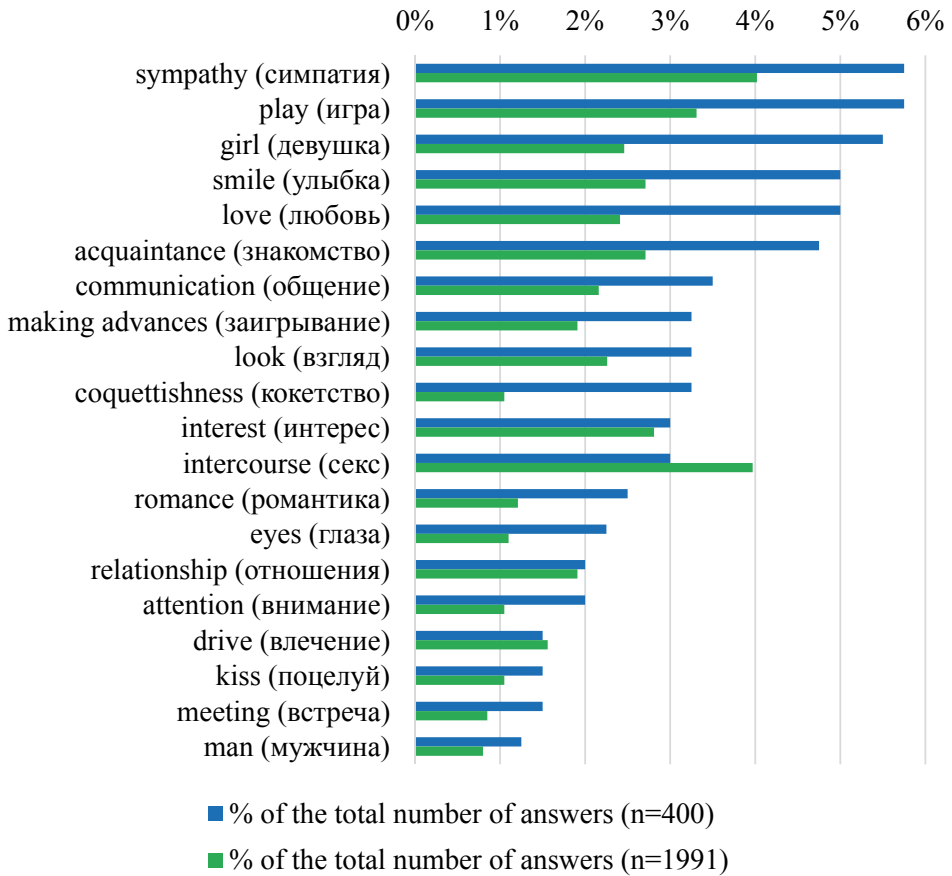


Figure 1. Comparative analysis of associative fields by five reactions and by the first reaction to the stimulus «flirting»

(2) **Determining general and specific features of the verbal behaviour of the young respondents.** General features of the verbal behaviour of the young respondents are represented by such lexemes (more than 1 per cent) as *play (игра)* (5.75%), *love (любовь)* (5.0%), *acquaintance (знакомство)* (4.75%), *look*, *making advances (взгляд, заигрывание)* (3.25%), *eyes (глаза)* (2.25%), *drive (влечение)* (1.5%) (cf. Figure 2).

In order to identify specific features of the verbal behaviour of the respondents by gender, «male» and «female» associative fields were constructed. The basis for highlighting the specific traits of the female / male respondents, reflected in certain lexemes, was absence of



the latter in the «male» / «female» associative field or a sufficiently large difference in the frequency of these lexemes. For example, the women's specific traits were expressed in such lexemes as *sympathy* (симпатия) (4.75% / 1.0%), *smile* (улыбка) (3.5% / 1.5%), *romance* (романтика) (1.75% / 0.75%), *relationship* (отношения) (1.5% / 0.5%), *charm* (обаяние) (1.25% / 0%), *man*, *lightness* (мужчина, легкость) (1.0% / 0.25%); the forward slash indicates the men's percentage of frequency of the reactions mentioned above.

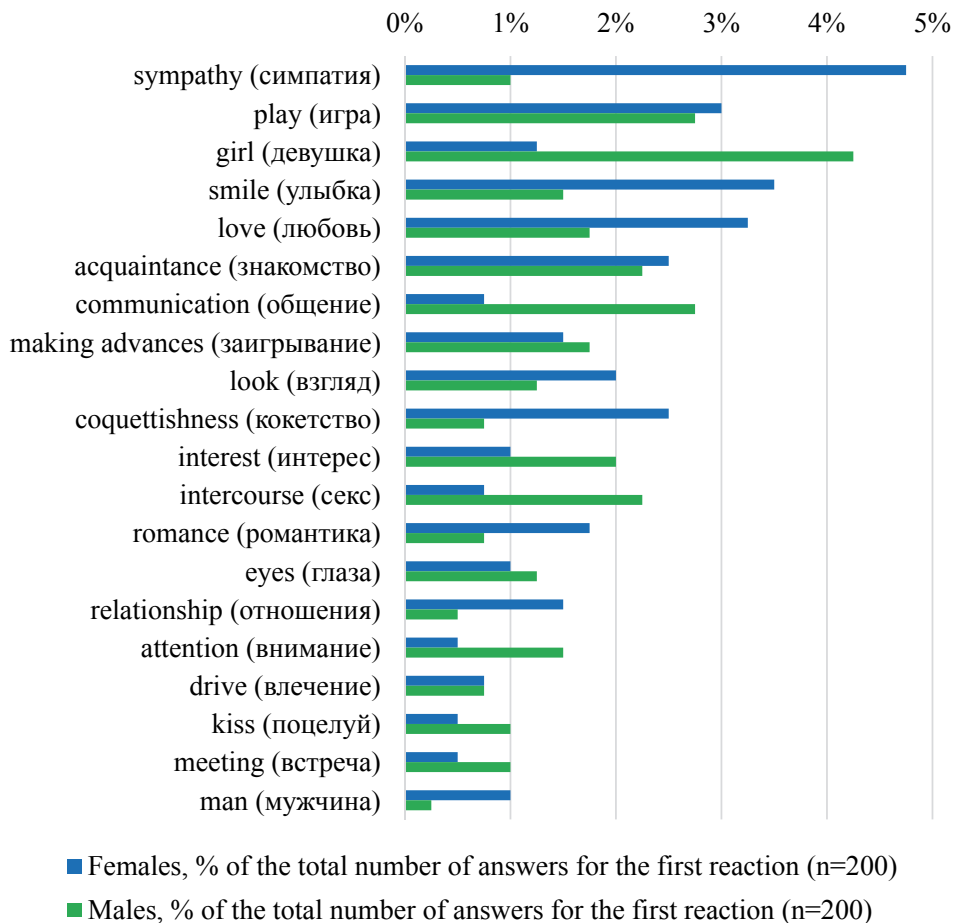


Figure 2. Comparative analysis of associations of female and male samples to the stimulus «flirting»

The men's specific traits were expressed in such lexemes as *girl* (*девушка*) (4.25% / 1.25%), *communication* (*общение*) (2.75% / 0.75%), *interest* (*интерес*) (2.0% / 1.0%), *intercourse* (*секс*) (2.25% / 0.75%), *attention* (*внимание*) (1.5% / 0.5%), *kiss*, *meeting* (*поцелуй, встреча*) (1.0% / 0.5%), *touch* (*касания*) (1.0% / 0 %), the forward slash indicates the women's percentage of frequency of the reactions mentioned above.

**(3) Isolated cases.** At the next stage of the research, isolated cases were comprehended. Isolated cases reflecting the individual meanings of the respondents are found only in the male associative field. They are as follows: *fun* (*веселье*), *wine* (*вино*), *hair* (*волосы*), *temporality* (*временность*), *lady* (*дама*), *girls* (*девушки*), *dialogue* (*диалог*), *drift* (*дрифт*), *frivolity* (*легкомыслие*), *flattery* (*лесть*), *lift* (*лифт*), *beloved* (*любимая*), *youth* (*молодость*), *sea* (*море*), *seduction* (*обольщение*), *pick-up* (*пикап*), *gifts* (*подарки*), *good time* (*приятное времяпровождение*), *pretty girl* (*симпатичная девушка*), *confidence* (*уверенность*), *curvy* (*фигурная*), *feelings* (*чувства*), *empathy* (*эмпатия*).

Isolated cases found only in the female associative field include: *gigolo* (*альфонс*), *bar* (*бар*), *lips* (*губы*), *intrigue* (*интрига*), *spark* (*искра*), *café* (*кафе*), *cosmetics* (*косметика*), *easy* (*легко*), *martini* (*мартини*), *easiness* (*непринужденность*), *new emotions* (*новые эмоции*), *guy* (*парень*), *it is getting late* (*позднее*), *touch* (*прикосновения*), *sanitary pads* (*прокладки*), *emancipation* (*раскрепощенность*), *self-realization* (*самореализация*), *secrecy* (*секретность*), *laughter* (*смех*), *unconstrained laughter* (*непринужденный смех*), *passion* (*страсть*), *humor* (*юмор*).

The analysis of the isolated cases made it possible to single out the following semantic clusters of reactions: age (возраст) (*youth* (*молодость*)), «period of time» (период времени) (*temporality* (*временность*)) and «time of day» («время суток») (*it is getting late* (*позднее*)).

**(4) Negative reactions.** The associative field of the stimulus «flirting» had a number of reactions with negative connotation\* (2.0%).

\* The researchers, authors of the article, coded the negative reactions using Russian dictionaries providing information about emotional connotations of words (Ozhegov & Shvedova, 2011; Yefremova, 2000; Ushakov, 1935–1940); e.g.. FLATTERY: subservient praise of somebody or something, hypocritical admiration for somebody or something (Yefremova, 2000). The agreement between the researchers was reached up to 95 per cent.

The reactions with negative connotation include the following isolated cases: unfaithfulness (*измена*) 3, gigolo (*альфонс*), frivolity (*легкомыслие*), flattery (*лесть*), seduction (*обольщение*), pick-up (*пикап*) 1.

**(5) Semantic clusters of the verbalised concept «*firting*».**

The output of the conducted research was distribution of 400 reactions among the following semantic groups/clusters and description of psycholinguistic meanings:

**Core clusters\*** (more than 10 per cent):

**1. «Verbal and non-verbal means of communication» («Вербальные и невербальные средства общения») – 110 (27.5%), f. 52 (13.0%), m. 58 (14.5%).** This cluster comprises semantic subclusters that were identified fairly conventionally

1.1. **«non-verbal means of communication» («невербальные средства общения»):** *smile* (улыбка) 20, *look* (взгляд) 13, *eyes* (глаза) 9, *attention* (внимание) 8, *charm* (обаяние) 5, *kiss* (поцелуй) 6, *touch* (касания) 4, *behaviour, to attract attention* (поведение, привлечь внимание) 3, *laugh, gesture* (смех, жест) 2, *hair* (волосы), *lips* (губы), *cosmetics* (косметика), *hints* (намек), *hint at something* (намек на что-то), *unconstrained laughter* (непринужденный смех), *touching* (прикосновения), *curvy* (фигурная) 1 – **83 (20.75%), f. 45 (11.25%), m. 38 (9.5%)**;

1.2. **«verbal means of communication» («вербальные средства общения»):** *communication* (общение) 14, *compliment* (комплимент) 4, *conversation* (разговор) 3, *jokes* (шутки) 2, *dialogue* (диалог), *flattery* (лесть), *tongue-in-cheek compliments* (острые комплименты с намеком), *humour* (юмор) 1 – **27 (6.75%), f. 7 (1.75%), m. 20 (5.0%)**.

**2. «Forms and types of interaction» («Формы и виды взаимодействия») – 101 (25.25%), f. 49 (12.25%), m. 52 (13.0%).** This cluster consists of three semantic subclusters:

2.1. **«sexless relationship» («неполовые отношения»):** *play* (игра) 23, *acquaintance* (знакомство) 19, *making advances*

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\* The reactions were distributed among various clusters on the basis of the algorithm of describing psycholinguistic meanings developed by Sternin and Rudakova (2011). Gordiienko-Mytrofanova and Sauta collaborated with Sternin for 3 years and described the psycholinguistic meanings of the stimulus word «playfulness» with a sample of 1,600 respondents under his supervision (Gordiienko-Mytrofanova & Sauta 2016a, Gordiienko-Mytrofanova et al., 2019).

(заигрывание) 13, relationship (отношения) 8, meeting (встреча) 6, playfulness (игривость), date (свидание) 3, good time (приятное времяпровождение), self-realization (самореализация) 1 – **77 (19.25%)**, f. 39 (9.75%), m. 38 (9.5%);

2.2. «*sexual relations*» («*половые отношения*»): intercourse (секс) 12, unfaithfulness (измена) 3, blow job (минет) 2, sanitary pads (прокладки) 1 – **18 (4.5%)**, f. 6 (1.5%), m. 12 (3.0%);

2.3. «*seduction activities*» («*деятельность по соблазнению*»): seduction (соблазн) 4, enticement (обольщение), pick-up (пикап) 1 – **6 (1.5%)**, f. 3 (0.75%), m. 3 (0.75%).

3. «*Emotions, feelings, states*» («*Эмоции, чувства, состояния*»): sympathy (симпатия) 23, love (любовь) 20, interest (интерес) 13, drive (влечение) 6, lightness (легкость) 5, being in love (влюбленность) 4, intimacy (близость), excitement (возбуждение) 3, vehemence (азарт), reciprocity (взаимность), tenderness (нежность), enthusiasm (увлечение), emotion (эмоция) 2, drift (дрифт), fun (веселье), spark (искра), easy (легко), frivolity (легкомыслие), new emotions (новые эмоции), ease (непринужденность), emancipation (раскрепощенность), passion (страсть), confidence (уверенность), feelings (чувства), empathy (эмпатия) 1 – **99 (24.75%)**, f. 57 (14.25%), m. 42 (10.5%).

4. «*Gender*» («*Пол*») – **42 (10.5%)**, f. 16 (4.0%), m. 26 (6.5%).  
This cluster comprises three semantic subclusters:

4.1 «*female*» («*женский пол*»): girl (девушка) 22, sly puss (кокетка), woman (женщина) 2, lady (дама), girls (девушки), beloved (любимая), pretty girl (симпатичная девушка) 1 – **30 (7.5%)**, f. 7 (1.75%), m. 23 (5.75%);

4.2 «*male*» («*мужской пол*»): man (мужчина) 5, gigolo (альфонс), guy (парень) 1 – **7 (1.75%)**, f. 6 (1.5%), m. 1 (0.25%);

4.3 «*heterosexuality*» («*гетеросексуальность*»): opposite gender (противоположный пол), a guy and a girl (парень и девушка) 2, occurs between a man and a woman (возникает между мужчиной и женщиной) 1 – **5 (1.25%)**, f. 3 (0.75%), m. 2 (0.5%).

**Peripheral clusters** (less than 10 per cent, but more than 1 per cent):

5. «*Romantic view of life*» («*Романтическое мироощущение*»): romance (романтика) 10, flowers (цветы) 3, wine (вино), martini (мартини), gifts (подарки) 1 – **16 (4.0%)**, f. 9 (2.25%), m. 7 (1.75%).

6. «**Meeting place**» («**Место встречи**»), real or virtual: *bar* (бар), *water* (вода), *café* (кафе), *lift* (лифт), *sea* (море), *social media* (соціальна сеть) 1 – 6 (1.5%), w. 3 (0.75%), m. 3 (0.75%).

**Clusters from extreme periphery** (no more than 1 per cent, but less than 0.25 per cent):

7. «**Time of year**» («**Время года**»): *spring* (весна) 2 – 2 (0.5%), m. 2 (0.5%).

8. «**Secret actions**» («**Скрытые действия**»): *secrecy* (секретность), *intrigue* (интрига) 1 – 2 (0.5%), f. 2 (0.5%).

**Isolated clusters:**

9. «**Age**» («**Возраст**»): *youth* (молодость) 1 – 1 (0.25%), m. 1 (0.25%).

10. «**Time of day**» («**Время суток**»): *it is getting late* (позднеет) 1 – 1 (0.25%), f. 1 (0.25%).

11. «**Time period**» («**Период времени**»): *temporality* (временность) 1 – 1 (0.25%), m. 1 (0.25%).

Synonymous reactions: *coquettishness* (кокетство) 13, *courtship* (ухаживание) 4 – 17 (4.25%), f. 11 (2.75%), m. 6 (1.5%).

Echo reaction: *fleece jacket* (флиска) – 1 (0.25%), m. 1 (0.25%).

Uninterpreted reactions: *flint* (флинт) – 1 (0.25%), m. 1 (0.25%).

**(6) Psycholinguistic meanings of the concept «flirting».** Based on cluster analysis, the psycholinguistic meanings of the word «*flirting*», was described. «Psycholinguistic meaning, – according to I. Sternin, – can be rightfully considered as the most adequate and reliable model of systemic word meaning reflecting the reality of linguistic consciousness of native speakers» (Sternin & Rudakova, 2011: 188). The algorithm of describing the psycholinguistic meaning implies a sequence of certain stages and was given in detail in our publications (Gordienko-Mytrofanova & Sauta, 2016). Here we dwell only on the semic interpretation of the results of the frequency analysis of the free association test to the stimulus «flirting» by the first reaction. On the stage of semic interpretation the produced reactions were interpreted as linguistic representations of the stimulus semantic components (semes). Associates that are close in meaning were grouped together, and their frequency was summed up, e.g.: *play* 39 [play 23, making advances 13, playfulness 3], *date* 15 [meeting 6, date 3], *seduction* 6, [seduction 4, enticement, pick-up 1], etc. The formulated semes of the outlined meanings were arranged in a connected definition of the meaning.

The definitions were formulated as an organized connected enumeration of experimentally outlined semantic components of each of the interconnected meanings. Each meaning was formulated separately. Since the description of meaning of each word is the author's interpretation, both the sememic attribution of associative reactions and the semic interpretation of the latter are given below.

**FLIRTING** (400 respondents)

**1. A TYPE OF COURTSHIP THAT DOES NOT INVOLVE SEXUAL INTIMACY.**

**Finds expression in RELATIONSHIP 8, which OCCURS BETWEEN A MAN AND A WOMAN 5 [opposite gender, a guy and a girl 2, occurs between a man and a woman 1] in YOUTH 1, and is characterized by RECIPROCITY, SECRECY 2, [secrecy, intrigue 1], TEMPORALITY 1 and ROMANCE 10 with FLOWERS 3, WINE 2 [wine, martini 1], GIFTS 1;**

**common both for GIRLS 24 [girl 22, girls, pretty girl 1], WOMEN, SLY PUSS 2, BELOVED, LADY 1, CURVY 1 [curvy 1] with attractive appearance, HAIR, LIPS, COSMETICS 1 and**

**MEN 5 [man 5], GIGOLO, GUY 1, who radiate CHARM 5;**

**aimed at PLAY 39 [play 23, making advances 13, playfulness 3], ACQUAINTANCE 19, ATTRACTING ATTENTION 11 [attention 8, attract attention 3], SEDUCTION 6 [seduction 4, enticement, pick-up 1], GOOD TIME 1, expression of SELF-REALISATION 1;**

**caused by SYMPATHY 23, LOVE 20, INTEREST 13, DRIVE 7 [drive 6, passion 1], BEING IN LOVE 6 [being in love 4, ENTHUSIASM 2, spark 1];**

**involves expressing 3 EMOTIONS 3 [emotion 2, new emotions 1] and FEELINGS 1, as LIGHTNESS 6 [lightness 5, easy 1], INTIMACY, EXCITEMENT 3, TENDERNESS, EASE 2 [ease, emancipation 1], VEHEMENCE 2, FUN, DRIFT, FRIVOLITY, CONFIDENCE, EMPATHY 1;**

**mostly consists of non-verbal signals: LOOK 22 [look 13, eyes 9], SMILE 20, KISS 6, TOUCH 5 [touch 4, touching 1], LAUGHTER 3 [laughter 2, unconstrained laughter 1], GESTURE, HINT 2 [hint at something 1, hints 1], as well as verbal ones: COMPLIMENTS 5 [compliment 4, tongue-in cheek compliments 1], JOKES 3 [jokes 2, humour 1], FLATTERY 1, which are common for COMMUNICATION 18 and BEHAVIOUR 3 on DATES 9 [meeting 6,**

date 3] **LATE 1** [it is getting late 1], in **SPRING 2**, for example, in **BAR 2** [bar, café 1], **LIFT, SEA, WATER, SOCIAL MEDIA 1**.

**Cumulative Index of Brightness\* – 363 (90.75%); number of words – 84; number of word combinations – 11.**

## 2. SEXUAL RELATIONS

**INTERCOURSE 18** [intercourse 12, unfaithfulness 3, blow job 2, sanitary pad 1].

**Cumulative Index of Brightness – 18 (4.5%); number of words – 4.**

Synonymous reactions: *coquettishness 13, courtship 4* – 17 (4.25%), *f. 11 (2.75%), m. 6 (1.5%)*. Echo reaction: *fleece jacket – 1 (0.25%), m. 1 (0.25%)*. Uninterpreted reactions: *флірт – 1 (0.25%), m. 1 (0.25%)*.

## Discussion

Regarding the free association test with the stimulus word «*flirting*» in the Russian, Ukrainian and English languages, we are aware of research conducted by Russian scholars (Karaulov et al., 2002a; 2002b) in the 1990s that described the results of the free association test with the stimulus word «*flirting*» with the sample of 104 respondents.

The respondents of the Russian sample, which is similar to ours in age are characterized by a considerable amount of reactions collocating with the stimulus «*flirting*» (33.3%): *light, nonsense, quick, spring, ladies', exquisite, amorous, fleeting, unpeaceful, dangerous, total, constant, delicate, hard*. Although most of these reactions contain substantive information to be interpreted as individual senses, it should be noted that Ukrainian sample displays a much wider semantic scope and prominent positive attitude to the stimulus. In general, the evaluation of this phenomenon by Russian-speaking respondents in Ukraine and members of the Russian linguistic culture is presented mainly by positive and neutral reactions.

It is also important to note that the results of studying *flirting* as a psychological phenomenon are reflected in the everyday linguistic consciousness of Russian-speaking residents of Ukraine: *5 styles of flirting* identified by Hall (2013) when studying male-female pairs of

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\* Cumulative Index of Brightness is the cumulative frequency of reactions that actualize a particular meaning.

heterosexual strangers (*physical, traditional, sincere, polite, playful*); 6 motives of *flirting* (*sexual, entertaining, research, social, self-assertive, instrumental*) according to Henningsen, Braz, and Davies (2008). All of the above motives are represented by reactions, which made up the clusters «*forms and types of interaction*» (25.25%) and «*emotions, feelings, states*» (24.75%). Note here that the motive for developing one's own self-esteem, the *self-assertive one*, was translated only into a single reaction of *self-realization*. The claims that flirting consists mainly of non-verbal signals, according to the researchers of non-verbal communication Givens (1978), Whitty (2003), and Watzlawick (1983), also found evidence in the linguistic consciousness of the Russian-speaking people of Ukraine, in the subcluster «*non-verbal means of communication*» (20.75%).

## Conclusions

The conducted cluster analysis has shown that the core of the verbalized concept «flirting» is represented by four semantic groups, which are represented relatively equally by male and female reactions: «*verbal and non-verbal means of communication*» (27.75%), «*forms and types of interaction*» (25.25%), «*emotions, feelings, states*» (24.75%), and «*gender*» (10.5%). Thus, the verbalized concept «flirting» is represented by lexemes that reflect mainly non-verbal communication (*smile, look, kiss, touch*), forms and types of interaction (*play, meeting, date*), lexemes expressing feelings and emotions (*love, sympathy, interest, drive*), as well as lexemes representing the female gender (*girl, woman, lady, sly puss*).

At the same time, attention is drawn to the fact that *flirting* in the associative behaviour of both men and women is attributed to «*non-verbal means of communication*» (10.5% f. / 10.25% m.). But the subcluster «*verbal means of communication*» is represented mainly by male reactions (5.5% m. / 1.5% f.).

Both men and women associate flirting with «*seduction activity*», however, the peripheral subcluster «*sexual relations*» is characterized by the preponderance of male reactions (3.0% m. / 1.5% f.).

Besides, the associative behaviour of the respondents is characterized by a heterosexual orientation of *flirting*, which is reflected



in the peripheral subcluster «heterosexuality» (1.25%), as well as in the fact that men associate *flirting* with female gender (5.75% m. / 1.75% f.) and women, respectively, with male gender (1.5% f. / 0.25% m.).

The peripheral clusters «*romantic relationship*» (4.0%) and «*meeting place*» (1.5%) are represented by a relatively equal number of male and female reactions. The analysis of isolated cases made it possible to single out the following semantic cluster reactions: age (*youth*), «period of time» (*temporality*) and «time of day» (*it is getting late*).

The analysis of the obtained results also showed that *flirting* and *intercourse* are not inextricably entwined in the linguistic consciousness of the Russian-speaking inhabitants of Ukraine. The sexual motive of flirting was reflected in the peripheral semantic subclusters «*sexual relations*» (4.5%) and «*seduction activity*» (1.5%).

Based on the results of cluster analysis, two psycholinguistic meanings of the stimulus word «*flirting*» were described: (1). *A type of courtship that does not involve sexual intimacy* and (2). *Sexual relations*. Psycholinguistic meanings made it possible to reveal the semantics of the concept «*flirting*» as a unit of the psychological reality of linguistic consciousness of the Russian-speaking young inhabitants of Ukraine including a vast semantic periphery of meanings, as well as semantic components of linguistic and cultural nature that cannot be revealed by traditional methods of semantic analysis (Sternin & Rudakova, 2011: 188).

The semantic content of the concept core of «*flirting*» does not depend on gender identity based on the results of the analysis of female and male associative fields. The fact that clusters on the extreme periphery are exclusively represented either by female («*secret actions*») or male reactions («*time of year*») is most probably explained by certain individual preferences in usage rather than by gender-specific tendencies. Based on the analysis of the reactions with negative connotation, the attitude of informants to the stimulus «*flirting*» is emotionally positive and it is characterized by its positive evaluation.

Comparative analysis of the verbalized concept «*flirting*» in the linguistic consciousness of Russian-speaking people of Ukraine and inhabitants of Russia suggests that the semantic content of the concept «*flirting*» is much wider in the linguistic consciousness of Ukrainian respondents. The national and typological perception of the concept «*flirting*» at this stage of the study was revealed in the fact

that, firstly, «*flirting*» is described by the lexeme expressing a feeling of stable emotional appeal to someone (*sympathy*), while a significant part of the reactions of Russian respondents is represented by reactions of collocation (*easy*). Secondly, flirting in the associative behaviour of Ukrainian respondents is characterized by heterosexual orientation.

In conclusion, we note that the linguistic consciousness of Russian-speaking inhabitants of Ukraine reflected the research findings of Hall (2013) (*flirting styles*), Henningsen, Braz, and Davies (2008) (*flirting motives*), as well as non-verbal communication specialists, Givens (1978), Whitty (2003), Watzlawick (1983), who claim that *flirting* consists mainly of non-verbal cues. We singled out the subcluster «*non-verbal means of communication*» that reaches 20.75% of all reactions.

This study belongs to a number of research works devoted to the analysis and description of the concepts of culture and national linguistic view of the world, therefore, we see the prospect of further research in conducting a comprehensive study of the verbalized concept «*flirting*» in the Ukrainian everyday linguistic consciousness, which implies its study in the linguistic consciousness of Ukrainian-speaking Ukrainians.

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## **АНОТАЦІЯ**

**Мета.** Виявити та описати семантичні компоненти вербалізованого концепту «флірт» як компонента ігрової компетентності в мовній свідомості російськомовних жителів України.

**Методи.** Основним методом дослідження був психолінгвістичний експеримент. Вибірку склали 400 респондентів молодого віку (18–35) у рівному співвідношенні чоловіків і жінок.

**Результати.** Концепт «флірт» представлено чотирма ядреними кластерами: «вербальні та невербальні засоби спілкування» (27.75%), «форми та види взаємодії» (25.25%), «емоції, почуття, стани» (24.75%) і «стать» (10.5%). Периферійні кластери «романтичні стосунки» (4.0%) і «місце зустрічі» (1.5%) представлені відносно однаковою кількістю чоловічих і жіночих реакцій. Кластери крайньої периферії, представлені виключно жіночими («приховані дії») або виключно чоловічими реакціями («пора року»), свідчать швидше про певну міру індивідуальних уподобань слововживань на стимул «флірт», ніж про статеву детерміновані реакції. Аналіз одиничних реакцій дозволив виділити такі кластери-реакції: «вік» (молодість), «період часу» (тимчасовість) і «час доби» (пізнішає). Асоціативну поведінку респондентів характеризує гетеросексуальна орієнтація флірту, що відобразилося в периферійному підкласі «гетеросексуальність» (1.25%). Із опертям на результати кластерного аналізу було описано два психолінгвістичних значення концепту «флірт»: (1) різновид залицяння, який не припускає сексуальної

близькості (90.75%) і (2) статеві стосунки (4.5%). Семантичне наповнення ядра концепту «флірт» не залежить від статевої ідентифікації за результатами аналізу жіночого та чоловічого асоціативних полів.

**Висновки.** Порівняльний аналіз вербалізованого концепту «флірт» у мовній свідомості російськомовних жителів України і жителів Росії дозволяє стверджувати, що українська вибірка характеризується ширшим семантичним спектром і яскраво вираженими позитивними емоціями на стимул. У цілому оцінювання цього явища російськомовними респондентами України та носіями російської лінгвокультури представлені переважно позитивними та нейтральними реакціями.

**Ключові слова:** ігрова компетентність, грайливість, ігрова позиція, флірт, психолінгвістичний експеримент, вільний асоціативний експеримент, мовна свідомість, молодість.

**Гордиенко-Митрофанова Ія, Кобзева Юлія & Гоголь Денис. Концепт «флірт» в мовній свідомості російськомовного населення України**

**АННОТАЦІЯ**

**Цель.** Выявить и описать семантические компоненты вербализованного концепта «флирт» как компонента игровой компетентности в языковом сознании русскоязычных жителей Украины.

**Методы.** Основным методом исследования был психолингвистический эксперимент. Выборку составили 400 респондентов молодого возраста (18–35) в равном соотношении мужчин и женщин.

**Результаты.** Концепт «флирт» представлен четырьмя ядерными кластерами: «вербальные и невербальные средства общения» (27.75%), «формы и виды взаимодействия» (25.25%), «эмоции, чувства, состояния» (24.75%) и «пол» (10.5%). Периферийные кластеры «романтические отношения» (4.0%) и «место встречи» (1.5%) представлены относительно одинаковым количеством мужских и женских реакций. Кластеры крайней периферии, представленные исключительно женскими («скрытые действия») или исключительно мужскими реакциями («время года»), свидетельствуют скорее об определенной степени индивидуальных предпочтений словоупотреблений на стимул «флирт», чем о поло-детерминированных реакциях. Анализ единичных реакций позволил выделить такие кластеры-реакции: «возраст» (молодость), «период времени» (временный) и «время суток» (позднее). Ассоциативное поведение респондентов характеризует гетеросексуальная ориентация флирта, что отразилось в периферийном подкластере «гетеросексуальность» (1.25%).

С опорой на результаты кластерного анализа было описано два психолингвистических значения концепта «флирт»: (1) разновидность ухаживания, не предполагающая сексуальной близости (90.75%) и (2) половые отношения (4.5%). Семантическое наполнение ядра концепта «флирт» не зависит от половой идентификации по результатам анализа женского и мужского асоціативних полів.

**Выводы.** Сравнительный анализ вербализованного концепта «флирт» в языковом сознании русскоязычных жителей Украины и жителей России позволяет утверждать, что украинская выборка характеризуется более широким семантическим спектром и ярко выраженными позитивными эмоциями на стимул. В целом оценка данного явления русскоязычными респондентами Украины и носителями русской лингвокультуры представлены преимущественно позитивными и нейтральными реакциями.

**Ключевые слова:** игровая компетентность, игривость, игровая позиция, флирт, психолингвистический эксперимент, свободный ассоциативный эксперимент, языковое сознание, молодость.

