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**THE PECULIARITIES OF PERCEPTION OF THE LEXEMES PEOPLE AND NATION BY THE UKRAINIAN YOUTH IN THE CONTEXT OF PRESENT-DAY CHRONOTOPOS**

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**Abstract:** *The article deals with the peculiarities of the perception by Ukrainian youth the lexemes people and nation. It also reveals social meanings linked in the minds of the Ukrainian youth with these lexical items at the present stage in the development of the Ukrainian language and Ukrainian society. The material of the article is based on the results of the associative experiment. The authors of the article offer their own vision of the mental and gender aspects in the perception of words stimuli people and nation by young people. They also prove the social precondition of the receptive activity of human consciousness, in particular the dependence of the perception of words as linguistic units on the conditions of social chronotopos.*

**Keywords:** *means of communication, social chronotopos, social meanings, social mentality, national self-awareness, mental profile, perception, semantic kernel, associative experiment, associative field, associative series, lexeme, lexeme-stimulus, people, nation, gender differences*

### **INTRODUCTION**

This article is an attempt to comprehend and substantiate scientifically the essence of information communication as a process related directly to the social environment and the era within which the society exists and informational communications are established. Writing of this article was preceded by the study of peculiarities of the perception of the lexeme *mankind* by young Ukrainians (Pryschepa, Plechko & Svysiuk, 2017). Having received interesting results of the peculiarities of the perception of the lexeme *mankind*, we also decided to study the peculiarities of the perception of the lexemes *people* and *nation* by modern Ukrainian youth. The associative experiment has been used as a research method. It is known that the system of values is formed under the influence of information a person receives during his maturation and formation as a person. As values of young people differ from the values of older people, their system of sense bearing values differs as well. Sense bearing values, in turn, are related to social meanings. It was impossible to cover all the aspects so we were primarily interested in the specificity of the perception of lexemes *people* and *nation*. These lexemes are connected with sense bearing values and social meanings, and they have recently gained a special importance for the Ukrainians.

Ukrainian researchers insist on the idea that the change of social meanings is a consequence of alterations in the mass consciousness of Ukrainians, in their ideology and culture in conditions of a social crisis (Burlachuk, 2005; Suprunenko, 2017). The research was carried out among Ukrainian students during 2015-2016 academic year, after the events that shook the minds of Ukrainians in 2013-2014.

The knowledge of anything is a component of social meaning and at the same time any knowledge is expressed by the word as a unit of language. The language is by its nature a sign system, and each of its elements is a sign that carries certain information and signals about a certain meaning. Meaning is the internal form of the word. The content of the word is related to social meanings (concepts, emotions, motives) which, as noted in works of Diachenko (2017) and Suprunenko (2017), have the property of aging (according to Diachenko) and constant updating (in accordance with Suprunenko). Therefore, the content of the word is considered to be a variable category.

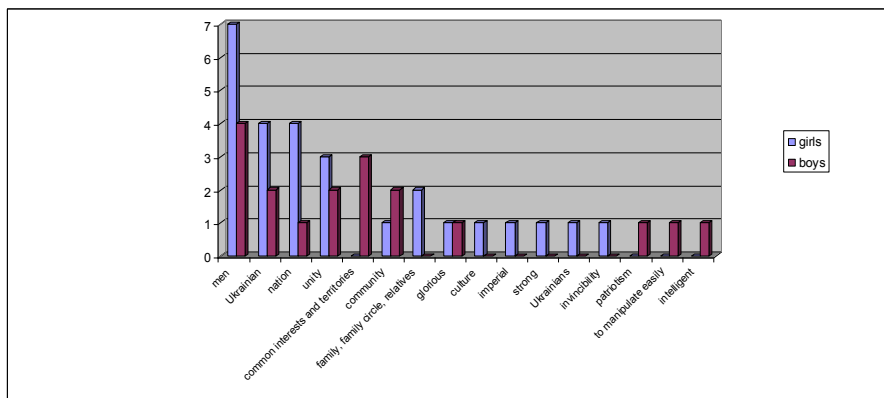
## MATERIALS AND METHODS

Our research is related to sociology and psychology, psycho- and sociolinguistics, as well as to linguistics itself, therefore, its theoretical basis is the works of such researchers as Potebnia (1989), Sokolov (1996), Diachenko (2017), Burlachuk (2005), Suprunenko (2017), Pavilenis (1983), Denysevych (2010), Liashuk (2016) et al. Main theoretical aspects of the study of social communications and the nature of social meanings as well as the methods of their decoding are discussed in the works of Sokolov, Diachenko, Burlachuk, Suprunenko, Pavilionis. Specialists in the field of psycholinguistics and sociolinguistics Denysevych, Goroshko, Kholod and Terekhov (2010) applied the associative experiment as a method of studying social influences on the language taking into account the gender aspect of language acquisition and expression. Their works prompted us as well to apply the associative experiment as a research method. In addition, social meanings are related to the sphere of ideal. From our point of view the associative experiment is considered to be an appropriate method for studying ideal values, since the ideal values and namely the associations of recipients are taken into account. The application of the associative experiment as a method for examining social meanings allows us to study psychological, cultural, sociological equivalents of meanings that form the associative field of the word-stimulus and are related to the sense values and social meanings that are active in social chronotopos. The associative experiment enables to reproduce the semantic structure of the word as it is understood by the recipient, appealing primarily to the subconscious (since the participants of the experiment produce associations, but do not explain how they understand this or that lexeme). Therefore, the so-called *social mentality* (Sokolov, 1996), which is manifested in the unity of conscious and unconscious meanings can be studied by means of the associative experiment. Describing the peculiarities of the perception of lexemes *people* and *nation* by modern Ukrainian youth we will also pay attention to gender differences. Hence, the use of the statistical method and the method of data analysis and interpretation proves to be requisite.

## RESULTS

100 first-year students of the Zhytomyr National Agroecological University (Ukraine) became participants of the experiment. The number of female and male representatives was equal. The type of the associative experiment is a chain: the recipients were offered to write a chain of association arising during the perception of the words-stimuli *people* and *nation*. The associative fields of the lexical item *people* were established and their semantic kernels were determined during the experiment. According to boys' perception the semantic kernel of the associative field of the lexeme *people* is represented in the following way: *men – Ukrainian – community – unity*. The girls' perception slightly differs: *men – Ukrainian – nation – unity*. It becomes obvious from *Figure 1* illustrating this difference and reflecting the structure of the social mentality of girls and boys.

According to Sokolov (1996), the social mentality is manifested in the unity of conscious and unconscious meanings. The social mentality of young Ukrainians, taking into account the specificity of the perception of the word-stimulus *people*, covers the social meanings associated with such concepts as *men*, *Ukrainian*, *nation*, *community*, *unity*. The associative fields of girls and boys would be identical if there were no 2 distinct associations – *community* (among boys) and *nation* (among girls).



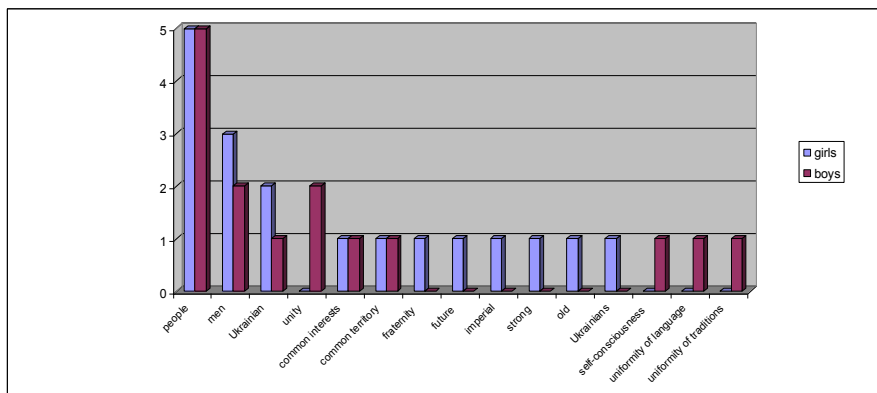
**Figure 1: The mostly used associations to the word-stimulus *people***

Source: researched by authors

The gender differences in perception are illustrated more vividly by individual associations. They are related to the psycho-emotional sphere, moral and ethical attitudes of the personality and partly reflect the national and historical as well as cultural aspects of the Ukrainian mentality: *patriotism*, *eternal*, *glorious*, *wealth*, *intelligent*, *easy to manipulate*, *you are not alone*, *a Ukrainian village* (boys' associations); *strong*, *invincibility*, *imperial*, *evening parties*, *Ukrainians* (girls' associations). The diagram in *Figure 1* also shows that the most commonly used students' associations to the lexeme-stimulus *people* are *men*, *Ukrainian*, *nation*.

As it is shown in *Figure 2*, such associations as *people*, *common interests*, *common territories*, *men*, *Ukrainian*, *Ukrainians*, *invincibility*, *passionate*, *fraternity*,

*Russian, future* represent the semantic dominant of the associative field of the lexical unit *nation*. The survey results showed that 2% of participants had no associations to the lexeme *nation*. To determine the causes of this phenomenon an additional study is required. The social mentality in case of perceiving the lexeme *nation* is defined by social meanings, which are indirectly expressed by such associations as *people, community, men, Ukrainians, indestructible, passionate and unrestrained*.



**Figure2: The mostly used associations to the word-stimulus *nation***

Source: researched by authors

It turned to be interesting that male participants were more active to produce associations to the lexeme-stimulus *nation*. This fact allows us to make an assumption that the notion *nation* in the value system of Ukrainian boys has acquired a special significance in the modern Ukrainian chronotop.

Taking into account the semantic closeness of the words-stimuli *people* and *nation* there exist a certain number of joint associations in their associative fields: *men, Ukrainian, unity (community)*. They constitute the semantic dominant of the associative field of the lexeme *nation*. In our opinion it indicates to the identification of the concepts "People" and "Nation" in the minds of young people, especially of girls. It can be explained either by the ignorance of semantic differences, certain peculiarities in the semantics of these words, or by the fact that in the minds of young people these two concepts "People" and "Nation" exist as a single semantic unit. *Invincibility, imperial, Ukrainian, strong, common territory, common interests* were common associations refer to both lexemes-stimuli. *Ukrainian* and *Ukrainians* are the most important among them: Ukrainian people, Ukrainian nation (Ukrainians). It is interesting to note that the association "men" is produced only to the word-stimulus "people." When compared to the association *Ukrainian* the association *Russian* given to the word-stimulus *nation* shows the insignificant percentage. It should be mentioned that *Ukrainian* is associated by youth with both words-stimuli, whereas *Russian* is only associated with the word-stimulus *nation*. The word-stimulus *nation* is perceived as *people* and *people* are not perceived as *nation* for some reasons.

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Among the two words-stimuli that were proposed to the participants of the experiment the word-stimulus *people* is notable for a greater variety of associations. This word produces 26 common associations, while the word-stimulus *nation* has only 18 associations. The least number of associations is produced to the word-stimulus *nation*. This time the girls who are usually active in the process of verbalization produced a small amount of associations. Considering the gender aspect of associations obtained as the result of the research, we can talk about differences in the perception of the suggested lexemes-stimuli by girls and boys. Girls are characterized by almost identical perception of lexemes *people* and *nation*. *People* among girls are associated with *nation* and vice versa. *Men, Ukrainians, unity* were common associations in the perception of both lexemes by girls. The boys instead associate *people* more with *community* than with *nation*. The lexeme-stimulus *nation* has caused more active production of associations among boys compared to girls. Usually boys produce fewer associations, besides their natural tendency to verbalize is lower. Thus, this associative splash concerning the word-stimulus *nation* induces to think. The boys showed the following series of most commonly used associations: *common interests, common territory, invincibility, passionate, irresistible*. These associations also outline the range of semantic values and social meanings with which modern Ukrainian boys connect the perception of lexemes-stimuli.

Thus, the *semantic dominants* of the word-stimulus *people* is the following: *men, Ukrainian, nation, unity, Ukraine, family, relatives* (among girls); *men, Ukraine, nation, unity, community* (among boys). *Semantic dominants* of the word-stimulus *nation* are: *people, men, Ukrainian, community* (among girls); *people, men, common interests, invincibility, passionate, unrestrained* (among boys).

Owing to the results obtained we can outline the mental profile of the experiment participants because the words-associations *unity, fraternity, pride, invincibility, strength, grandeur, mentality, passionate, eternal, common interest, common customs, common territory, courage, patriotism* essentially nominate the concepts that are components of the national self-consciousness of young Ukrainians. These associations also give an idea of the social semantic values of modern Ukrainian youth: *men, relatives, Ukraine, Ukrainian, welfare, culture, community, people and nation*.

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