

CRISIS AS A RELEVANT LEXEME IN THE LINGUISTIC CONSCIOUSNESS OF UKRAINIAN PEOPLE

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Abstract. The article presents the results of the psycholinguistic experiment whose aim was to reveal universal and specific features of the verbal behaviour of respondents when studying the stimulus word “crisis” as a relevant lexeme in the linguistic consciousness of Ukrainian people, as well as to single out various sememes that were actualised in the course of the experiment. The total sample comprised 297 respondents: 170 females and 127 males of different ages (“juvenility” – 17–21, “youth” – 22–35, “maturity” – 36–60, “old age” – 61 and above). The universal features of verbal behaviour displayed both by males and females are reflected in such lexemes as “money”, “age”, “economy”, “country”, “problem”, “poverty”, “unemployment”, “war”, “depression”, “misery”. The respondents of all age groups, both males and females, show negative evaluative and emotional attitude to the stimulus word in question. The specific features of the verbal behaviour of the respondents are reflected in the following lexemes: “bankrupt”, “panic”, “ruin”, “deadlock”, “chaos”, “Ukraine”. Among other things, both males and females associate crisis with the state of mental tension, anxiety, and fear, which manifests itself in such reactions as “depression”, “panic”, “negative”, “deadlock”, “bad”, etc. Individual features of verbal behaviour are reflected in the following negative emotional reactions: “pain”, “mess”, “mayhem”, “panic”, “fear”, “alarm”, “mix-up”, etc., with an obvious prevalence of female reactions. Associative reactions to the stimulus word “crisis” yield the following sememes: “lack of money”, “unemployment”, “problem”, “age”, “depression”, “opportunity”.

Keywords: *psycholinguistic experiment, free word association test, verbal behaviour, linguistic consciousness, stimulus word “crisis”.*

Гордієнко-Митрофанова Ія, Кобзева Юлія, Бондар Юлія. «Криза» як актуальна лексема в мовній свідомості українців.

Анотація. У статті викладено результати психолінгвістичного експерименту, мета якого полягала у виявленні універсальних та специфічних рис у вербальній поведінці респондентів при дослідженні стимулу «криза» як актуальної лексеми в мовній свідомості жителів України, а також у виявленні різноманітних семем, реально представлених у матеріалі експерименту. Вибірку склали 297 осіб: жінок – 170, чоловіків – 127 («пізня юність» – 17–21, «молодість» – 22–35, «зрілість» – 36–60 і «пізня зрілість» – 61 і старіше). Універсальні риси у вербальній поведінці як жінок, так і чоловіків знайшли своє відображення у таких лексемах як «гроші», «вік», «економіка», «країна», «проблема», «бідність», «безробіття», «війна», «депресія», «злидні». Загальним для всіх вікових груп та

статей є негативна оцінка й емоційна характеристика стимулу. Специфічні риси у вербальній поведінці випробовуваних знайшли своє вираження в таких лексемах «банкрот», «паніка», «розруха», «ступор», «хаос», «Україна». Як жінки, так і чоловіки пов'язують кризу також зі станом психічного напруження, переживанням тривоги і страху, що знаходить своє вираження в таких реакціях як «депресія», «паніка», «негатив», «ступор», «погано» і т. ін. Індивідуальні риси вербальної поведінки відображені у негативних емоційно-експресивних реакціях: «біль», «капець», «караул», «паніка», «страх», «жах», «фігня» та ін., з явною перевагою жіночих реакцій. Асоціативні реакції на стимул «криза» утворюють такі семми: «недостатність грошей», «безробіття», «проблема», «вік», «депресія», «можливість».

Ключові слова: психолінгвістичний експеримент, вільний асоціативний експеримент, вербальна поведінка, мовна свідомість, стимул «криза».

1. Introduction

The global economic crisis that started in 2008 has become subject of research in various fields of science. The research effort made by linguists and psycholinguists resulted in the conclusion that the concept of crisis is one of the most relevant components of the conceptual sphere of a modern human being, both socially and culturally (Prokofieva, 2006). I. Bashkova points out that the 21st century marks a growing presence of “crisis” in the human consciousness, which reveals itself in a number of ways. First of all, the very word “crisis” has become more frequent (it was in the first decade of the 21st century that this word was at the peak of its “popularity”). Secondly, it has expanded its lexical and semantic combinability. Besides, this noun has acquired new grammar patterns, and finally, the noun “crisis” has built its own derivational family: кризисный (crisis-related), антикризисный (anti-crisis), кризисология (crisis management studies), кризис-менеджер (crisis manager), кризис-прогноз (crisis forecasting), compared with only one derivative (кризисный “crisis-related”) in the 20th century (Bashkova, 2009:28)

The lexicographic description of the word “crisis” reveals a number of nuclear components that ensure the stability of the conceptual core. For example, a thorough analysis of syntagmatic relations undertaken by A. Slatin enabled him to conclude that dictionary definitions describe crisis in terms of its strength (“major”, “grave”, “acute”), its adverse effect on other phenomena (“severe”), repeated nature (“continuous”), and unpredictability (“sudden”). The author points out that “crisis as a concept is part of a certain cause-and-effect relationship”, which is proved by such collocations, as “the cause of crisis”, “the consequence of crisis”, “as a result of the crisis”. On every conceptual level “crisis” as a notion is generally interpreted as a situation that brings about fundamental changes in the state of the subject experiencing this situation. These changes are characterised by certain incompleteness, with instability being a notorious feature of this period of time. The situation of crisis is generally considered as something unnatural and abnormal. The above mentioned conceptual characteristics constitute the basic conceptual level which remains the same in all the definitions given by dictionaries (Slatin, 2016).

T. Gerasina and A. Pogorelko, who studied the means of metaphoric verbalisation of the concept “crisis”, outline three predominant metaphoric models: natural element metaphor, biological model and spatial model that are implemented differently in the discourse of different cultures (Gerasina, Pogorelko, 2011:187).

M. Voroshilova speaks about three key metaphoric models that create a metaphoric image of the global crisis in the contemporary political cartoons in Russia: “crisis as a downfall” (catastrophe included), “crisis as a swing”, “crisis as a severe illness, death”. The image of crisis is generally defined by the following semantic components: instability, inevitability and disastrous consequences (Voroshilova, 2010a:93).

L. Tsoneva describes basic metaphoric models that represent economic crisis, the most productive of which are those with “medicine” and “nature” as source spheres. (Tsoneva, 2012).

The metaphoric modelling of crisis has not lost its relevance in modern mass media (Shmelyova, 2009; Salatova, 2011; Voroshilova, 2010).

In the framework of cognitive linguistics the contemporary economic crisis is also analysed from the point of view of precedence (Nemirova, 2010; Voroshilova, 2010, 2011). Precedent phenomena are seen as representative components of the political scenario known as “the contemporary economic crisis”, which is characterised by three models of establishing context: mythologisation, demythologisation, anti-mythologisation (Nemirova, 2010:138).

The Associative Thesaurus of the Russian Language shows the associative relations of the word “crisis” as of the early 1990-s. This work helps us to understand which values and beliefs used to be relevant for the society of the early 90s. High-frequency reactions to the stimulus word “crisis” such as “economic”, “came”, “power”, “governmental”, “socialism”, “economy”, “disease”, “deep”, “monetary”, “soul”, “long”, “inflation”, “drawn to a head”, etc. were given during an associative experiment (The Associative Thesaurus of the Russian Language, 2002).

The present article describes the results of the research into the stimulus word “crisis” in the framework of psycholinguistic approach implemented by two post-graduate students of the department of practical psychology, Iu. Kobzieva, and Yu. Bondar, from Hryhoriy Skovoroda Kharkiv National Pedagogical University, under the supervision of I. Gordiienko-Mytrofanova, professor of the department of practical psychology of Hryhoriy Skovoroda Kharkiv National Pedagogical University.

The aim and objectives of the present paper were to reveal universal and specific features of the verbal behaviour of respondents by means of the psycholinguistic experiment. It also sought to single out various sememes triggered in the course of the experiment by the stimulus word “crisis”, which is a relevant lexeme in the linguistic consciousness of Ukrainian people.

2. Methods

The psycholinguistic experiment was conducted in order to reveal universal and specific features of the verbal behaviour of respondents. The main stage of the psycholinguistic experiments relied on the free association experiment which was

carried out in writing. According to the given instruction, the respondents were to indicate their sex, age, education/job, marital status and write down first five words that occurred to them, associated with the word “crisis”.

The total sample for revealing universal and specific features of the verbal behaviour of respondents against the stimulus word “crisis” comprised 297 respondents: 170 females and 127 males. There were 13 people aged 16 (11 females and 2 males); 68 people aged 17–21 (42 females and 26 males); 103 people aged 22–35 (45 females and 58 males); 90 people aged 36–60 (59 females and 31 males); 20 people aged 61–78 (11 females and 9 males); 3 people who did not indicate their age.

As far as the education criterion is concerned, 93 females and 81 males have a university degree; 11 females and 7 males have received vocational training; 41 females and 5 males have secondary education; 21 females and 33 males have not completed university education; 4 females and 1 male did not indicate their educational background.

864 reactions (as a result of first five reactions) were produced by the respondents against the stimulus word “crisis”, including 646 words and 218 word combinations.

3. Results and Discussion

The results of the free association test were used to build the association field of the stimulus word “crisis” (as a result of first five reactions), where all reactions are arranged in the decreasing order of their frequency. A fragment of the association field is given below, which shows reactions that have frequency of 1 % and higher (the figures in brackets indicate frequency: “*money*” (2.89 %), “*poverty*” (2.78 %), “*economy*” (1.97 %), “*unemployment*” (1.85 %), “*problem*” (1.85 %), “*country*” (1.74 %), “*lack of money*” (1.5 %), “*misery*” (1.5 %), “*being short of money*” (1.27 %), “*depression*” (1.27 %), “*middle-age crisis*” (1.27 %), “*war*” (1.16 %), “*instability*” (1.16 %), “*monetary*” (1.04 %), “*inflation*” (1.04 %), “*politics*” (1.04 %).

A number of chained association reactions deserve close attention. For instance, every subsequent reaction is not triggered by the stimulus word in question (“crisis”) and acts as a stimulus for the reaction that follows. Having analysed the received data, we agreed that it can be explained by the fact that these words appear to be emotionally charged for the respondents and are connected with their jobs, for example: help – divorce – poverty – starvation – death (these are reactions produced by a man, 26, a lawyer, who associates his job with providing assistance in various critical situations, including those caused by divorce, which in its turn apparently leads to poverty, and poverty entails starvation which leads to death).

However, such examples were not very numerous, which was proved by the frequency analysis of the first reaction (see Table 1). Columns 1 and 3 of the table show the results of the frequency analysis (the first and all five reactions respectively). Columns 4 and 5 display the results of the frequency analysis for the female sample (the first and all five reactions respectively). Columns 6 and 7 display the results of the frequency analysis for the male sample (the first and all five

reactions respectively). The table shows reactions with a frequency of 1 % and higher.

Table 1

**Comparative study of the results of the frequency analysis
with the stimulus word “crisis” (the first reaction vs. all five reactions)**

Responses	297	864	“Female”, 170	“Female”, 412	“Male”, 120	“Male”, 452
	frequency, (%)	frequency, (%)	frequency, (%)	frequency, (%)	frequency, (%)	frequency, (%)
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
disaster	5 (1.68)	7 (0.81)	4 (1.35)	4 (0.46)	1 (0.34)	3 (0.35)
poverty	9 (3.03)	24 (2.78)	4 (1.35)	9 (1.04)	5 (1.68)	15 (1.74)
being short of money	2 (0.67)	11 (1.27)	2 (0.67)	8 (0.93)	0 (0.00)	3 (0.35)
unemployment	7 (2.36)	16 (1.85)	5 (1.68)	8 (0.93)	2 (0.67)	8 (0.93)
pain	1 (0.34)	5 (0.58)	0 (0.00)	2 (0.23)	1 (0.34)	3 (0.35)
power	0 (0.00)	4 (0.46)	0 (0.00)	3 (0.35)	0 (0.00)	1 (0.12)
military and political	2 (0.67)	4 (0.46)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	2 (0.67)	4 (0.46)
military	0 (0.00)	8 (0.93)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	8 (0.93)
opportunity	2 (0.67)	8 (0.93)	1 (0.34)	4 (0.46)	1 (0.34)	4 (0.46)
age	4 (1.35)	6 (0.69)	4 (1.35)	6 (0.69)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)
war	1 (0.34)	10 (1.16)	1 (0.34)	4 (0.46)	0 (0.00)	6 (0.69)
way out	1 (0.34)	4 (0.46)	1 (0.34)	3 (0.35)	0 (0.00)	1 (0.12)
starvation	1 (0.34)	7 (0.81)	1 (0.34)	4 (0.46)	0 (0.00)	3 (0.35)
state	2 (0.67)	4 (0.46)	0 (0.00)	1 (0.12)	2 (0.67)	3 (0.35)
monetary	5 (1.68)	9 (1.04)	1 (0.34)	1 (0.12)	4 (1.35)	8 (0.93)
money	17 (5.72)	25 (2.89)	14 (4.71)	18 (2.08)	3 (1.01)	7 (0.81)
depression	4 (1.35)	11 (1.27)	2 (0.67)	6 (0.69)	2 (0.67)	5 (0.58)
deficit	1 (0.34)	6 (0.69)	0 (0.00)	2 (0.23)	1 (0.34)	4 (0.46)
default	3 (1.01)	4 (0.46)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	3 (1.01)	4 (0.46)
dollar	1 (0.34)	7 (0.81)	1 (0.34)	2 (0.23)	0 (0.00)	5 (0.58)
spiritual	2 (0.67)	2 (0.23)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	2 (0.67)	2 (0.23)
<i>obscene word</i>	4 (1.35)	8 (0.93)	2 (0.67)	2 (0.23)	2 (0.67)	6 (0.69)
stagnation	3 (1.01)	4 (0.46)	2 (0.67)	3 (0.35)	1 (0.34)	1 (0.12)
inflation	3 (1.01)	9 (1.04)	1 (0.34)	1 (0.12)	2 (0.67)	8 (0.93)
little money	3 (1.01)	5 0.58)	3 (1.01)	5 (0.58)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)
negative	2 (0.67)	4 (0.46)	1 (0.34)	2 (0.23)	1 (0.34)	2 (0.23)
shortage of money	2 (0.67)	2 (0.23)	2 (0.67)	2 (0.23)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)
instability	4 (1.35)	10 (1.16)	3 (1.01)	6 (0.69)	1 (0.34)	4 (0.46)
no money	3 (1.01)	3 (0.35)	3 (1.01)	3 (0.35)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)
lack of money	10 (3.37)	13 (1.50)	7 (2.36)	9 (1.04)	3(1.01)	4 (0.46)
misery	4 (1.35)	13 (1.50)	2 (0.67)	7 (0.81)	2 (0.67)	6 (0.69)
being out of pocket	2 (0.67)	3 (0.35)	0 (0.00)	1 (0.12)	2 (0.67)	2 (0.23)

End of Table 1

panic	2 (0.67)	2 (0.23)	1 (0.34)	1 (0.12)	1 (0.34)	1 (0.12)
bad	4 (1.35)	4 (0.46)	3 (1.01)	3 (0.35)	1 (0.34)	1 (0.12)
politics	1 (0.34)	9 (1.04)	1 (0.34)	6 (0.69)	0 (0.00)	3 (0.35)
political	2 (0.67)	3 (0.35)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	2 (0.67)	3 (0.35)
problem	9 (3.03)	16 (1.85)	5 (1.68)	11 (1.27)	4 (1.35)	5 (0.58)
ruin	1 (0.34)	6 (0.69)	0 (0.00)	2 (0.23)	1 (0.34)	4 (0.46)
difficult situation in the country	2 (0.67)	5 (0.58)	1 (0.34)	4 (0.46)	1 (0.34)	1 (0.12)
middle-age crisis	5 (1.68)	11 (1.27)	4 (1.35)	6 (0.69)	1 (0.34)	5 (0.58)
country	4 (1.35)	15 (1.74)	3 (1.01)	10 (1.16)	1 (0.34)	5 (0.58)
fear	1 (0.34)	5 (0.58)	1 (0.34)	3 (0.35)	0 (0.00)	2 (0.23)
stress	3 (1.01)	4 (0.46)	3 (1.01)	4 (0.46)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)
deadlock	2 (0.67)	2 (0.23)	1 (0.34)	1 (0.12)	1 (0.34)	1 (0.12)
difficulties	2 (0.67)	6 (0.69)	2 (0.67)	4 (0.46)	0 (0.00)	2 (0.23)
alarm	4 (1.35)	5 (0.58)	4 (1.35)	5 (0.58)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)
Ukraine	2 (0.67)	8 (0.93)	1 (0.34)	6 (0.69)	1 (0.34)	2 (0.23)
regression	2 (0.67)	8 (0.93)	1 (0.34)	3 (0.35)	1 (0.34)	5 (0.58)
financial	1 (0.34)	5 (0.58)	0 (0.00)	1 (0.12)	1 (0.34)	4 (0.46)
chaos	2 (0.67)	7 (0.81)	1 (0.34)	3 (0.35)	1 (0.34)	4 (0.46)
economy	5 (1.68)	17 (1.97)	3 (1.01)	9 (1.04)	2 (0.67)	8 (0.93)
economic	3 (1.01)	7 (0.81)	1 (0.34)	1 (0.12)	2 (0.67)	6 (0.69)

The results did not differ much from what had been anticipated. Subsequently, in order to obtain more objective information about the universal features of the verbal behaviour of the respondents, the produced reactions were subjected to partial semic interpretation. However, this generalisation procedure involved only cognate associates, as well as various nominations of one semantic component by means of different parts of speech (their frequencies were summed up). For example: economy 6, economic 3, economic decline 1, economic problems 1 → *economy 11*.

The analysis of the results produced by the sample does not reveal any changes either in the content or in the nature of the lexemes. All high-frequency reactions (1 % and higher) were distributed among several integrated associates.

The integrated associates, such as “*money*” (20.59 %/ 11.81 %), “*age*” (5.29 %/ 1.57 %), “*economy*” (4.11 %/ 3.15 %), “*country*” (3.53 %/ 3.15 %), “*problem*” (2.94 %/ 3.94 %), “*poverty*” (2.35 %/ 3.94 %), “*unemployment*” (2.94 %/ 1.57 %), “*war*” (1.18 %/ 2.36 %), “*depression*” (1.18 %/ 1.57 %), “*misery*” (1.18 %/ 1.57 %) account for more than 1 % for both males and females in the sample. The figures in the brackets indicate the frequency (%) of associates for female and male samples respectively (here and in what follows). These very associates reflect the universal features of the verbal behaviour of the respondents. Alongside with this, such associates as “*instability*” (2.94 %/ 0.79 %), “*disaster*” (2.35 %/ 0.79 %), “*bad*” (2.35 %/ 0.79 %), “*alarm*” (2.35 %/ 0 %), “*high prices*” (1.18 %/ 0.79 %), “*stagnation*” (1.18 %/ 0.79 %), “*stress*” (1.76 %/ 0 %), “*difficulty*” (1.18 %/

0.79 %) turn out to be highly frequent only because they are frequently produced by females, whereas such associates as “*decline*” (0.3 %/ 2.36 %), “*opportunity*” (0.3 %/ 1.57 %), “*default*” (0 %/ 2.36 %), “*negative*” (0.3 %/ 1.57 %), “*politics*” (0.3 %/ 1.57 %), “*inflation*” (0.3 %/ 1.57 %), “*difficult situation*” (0.3 %/ 1.57 %), “*difficulty*” (0.3 %/ 1.57 %) appear to have frequency over 1 % only because they are more frequently produced by males. However, it is worth mentioning that an utterly negative emotional reaction is represented by use of some obscene words amongst both male and female respondents.

The specific features of the verbal behaviour of respondents are reflected in the peripheral reactions with a frequency lower than 1 %, but higher than 0.3 %: “*being short of money*”, “*military and political*”, “*opportunity*”, “*state*”, “*spiritual*”, “*negative*”, “*shortage of money*”, “*being out of pocket*”, “*panic*”, “*political*”, “*problems*”, “*deadlock*”, “*Ukraine*”, “*regression*”, “*chaos*”.

The generalization of cognate associates made it possible to single out certain specific features that are reflected in the following lexemes: “*bankrupt*”, “*panic*”, “*ruin*”, “*deadlock*”, “*chaos*”, “*Ukraine*”. These are singular reactions produced by male and female samples, meaning that they reflect individual peculiarities and experience, personal ideas and feelings experienced by all the respondents, both males and females.

Some reactions appear to be purely female, such as “*age*”, “*alarm*”, 4, “*stress*”, “*little money*”, “*no money*”, 3, “*shortage of money*” 2, “*rupture*” 1, whereas other reactions turn out to be predominantly male – “*default*”, 3, “*budget*”, 1, “*state*”, “*spiritual*”, “*political*”, 2, the figure after the reaction indicates its frequency.

Among all the responses to the stimulus word “*crisis*”, there are a few ones with positive connotations produced both by males and females of all ages, which is the so-called bright side of “*crisis*”: “*opportunity*” (f., 32, m., 26), “*opportunities and everything connected with them*” (m., 36), “*way out*” (f., 37), “*tapping into one’s inner resources*” (f., 51), “*optimism*” (f., 70), “*rebooting*” (f., 40), “*transition to a new era*” (m., 48), “*development*” (f., 45); “*chance*” (f., 44); “*hopelessness with a prospect for finding a solution to problems*” (f., 43), “*wealth*” (m., 23), “*recovery*” (m., 60), “*changes*” (m., 23), “*help*” (m., 26), “*sunshine*” (m., 27), “*hurray*” (m., 31), “*success*” (m., 53), (the sex and the age of the respondents are indicated in the brackets). All the above mentioned reactions are singular, except “*opportunity*”.

On the whole, however, the respondents show a negative emotional attitude to the stimulus word “*crisis*” and consider it as something negative.

Individual features of the verbal behaviour of respondents are reflected in the following negative emotional reactions: “*pain*” (m., 24), “*mess*” (f., 42), “*mayhem*” (f., 62), “*panic*” (f., 46/ m., 32), “*buttocks covered with cobweb*” (f., 52), “*being screwed up*” (m., 37), “*fear*” (f., 53), “*alarm*” (f., 22, f., 24, f., 26, f., 41), “*mix-up*” (f., 27) with an obvious prevalence of female reactions.

The analysis of peripheral and singular reactions showed that both male and female respondents associate crisis with a state of mental tension, anxiety and fear, which is reflected in such reactions as “*depression*” (1.18 %/ 1.57 %), “*panic*” (0.3 %/ 0.79 %), “*negative*” (0.3 %/ 0.79 %), “*deadlock*” (0.3 %/ 0.79 %), “*bad*”

(1.76 %/ 0.79 %), “alarm” (2.35 %/ 0 %), “stress” (1.76 %/ 0 %), as well as in such singular female reactions as: “fear”, “despair”, “feeling empty inside”, “dissatisfaction” and singular male reactions, such as “hopelessness”, “disbalance”, “disturbance”, “difficult”.

4. Conclusions

A conclusion can be made that rather than being associated with the political crisis in the country, the word "crisis" in the linguistic consciousness of Ukrainian people is associated in the first place, and mainly by women, with lack of money or its acute shortage. It is also associated with age and the economic situation in the country, which is coupled with unemployment, poverty and misery.

The results of our experiment were presented at the Third National Research Conference *Personality under Critical Conditions and Critical Life Circumstances: Psychotechnologies of Personality Changes* held on February 16–17, 2017, where they received approval by practising psychologists who work in counselling. The influence of gender manifests itself in certain negative emotional responses to the stimulus word “crisis”, which were mostly produced by women.

In the course of this research all associative responses to the stimulus word “crisis” were divided into six groups and the following lexemes were singled out: “lack of money”, “unemployment”, “problem”, “age”, “depression”, “opportunity”. The prospective further research into the topic is expected to deal with the description of psycholinguistic meanings of the stimulus word “crisis”.

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