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**COVID EPIDEMIC PERCEPTION THROUGH UKRAINIAN-TURKISH
CONTEXT (SOCIO-PSYCHOLINGUISTIC APPROACH)**

**Сприймання епідемії Covid в українсько-турецькому контексті
(соціо-психолінгвістичний підхід)**

Nilüfer Narlı

Dr. Sc. in Sociology, Professor
Bahcesehir University (Turkey)
nilufer.narli@eas.bau.edu.tr
<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3387-4025>

Olena Goroshko

Dr. Sc. in Sociology and Linguistics, Professor
National Technical University “Kharkiv Polytechnic Institute” (Ukraine)
olena.goroshko1965@gmail.com
<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8592-1022>

Oğuzcan Karakaya

Research Assistant
Bahcesehir University (Turkey)
oguzcan.karakaya@eas.bau.edu.tr
<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7389-088X>

Abstract

The article depicts the perception of the concept of «coronavirus» in the linguistic consciousness of native speakers of Ukrainian and Turkish concerning the impact of COVID-19 pandemic on students in higher education. Using the methods of free association test, and SPSS handling of data 20 associative fields to the stimuli specifying the concept of coronavirus: «Coronavirus, Covid-19, pandemic, social distance, lockdown quarantine, mask, tests, self-isolation, vaccine» are obtained. The data provides the clear picture with what the coronavirus concept associates in the mentality of Ukrainian and Turkish students. The negative stimuli linked with danger, uncertainty, disaster and illness prevail in both samples.

Key words: Covid-19, education, free association test, Turkey, Ukraine.

Introduction

Bcmyn

The COVID-19 outbreak is impacting all spheres of the modern society, including our daily life. As of 10 November 2021, confirmed cases worldwide totaled over 268,850,035 with death rate of reached 5,305,715 (Statistics and Research Coronavirus Pandemic, (COVID-19) 2021). More than 185 countries, areas or territories had been affected by the Corona outbreak (COVID-19 and higher education: Today and tomorrow. Impact Analysis, policy responses and recommendations, 2020). The fast corona spread across the world made the World Health Organization (WHO) to declare COVID-19 a pandemic on 11 March 2020. The WHO suggested taking measures and most governments around the World implemented isolation/quarantine measures and temporarily closed educational institutions in the year 2020 to curb the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic (Anderson, et al, 2020). The influence of the pandemic on the society was so powerful, unprecedented and massive that it is possible to speak about the coin of a new term *Covid Divide* depicting various access and limitations to vaccination, digital, human and medical resources, etc. The pandemic of COVID-19 has affected the work and education globally, with largest disruption of education systems. It has had an unprecedented impact on higher education worldwide concerning all its spheres. The data obtained provides a synthesis of the emerging evidence on what impact COVID-19 has on three specific aspects of higher education in Europe: teaching and learning; the social dimension of higher education (i.e. the effect on underrepresented, vulnerable and disadvantaged learners); and student mobility (The Social Dimension of Higher Education in Europe, 2020).

UNESCO conducted a global survey aimed at providing an evidence-based overview of the current situation of the higher education system at national and global levels.

The results reveal insights on how some countries were able to transform challenges, brought by the rapid digitalization of education, into opportunities through strong government support and international cooperation, and how several counties practically have failed this challenge (COVID-19 and higher education: Today and tomorrow. Impact Analysis, policy responses and recommendations, 2020).

The survey also tries to evaluate the impact the pandemic had on higher education systems in terms of access, equity and quality of teaching and learning, university operation, national challenges, emerging issues, and strategic responses. The major impact of COVID-19 on teaching and learning is the increase in online education. The hybrid mode of teaching has become the most popular form (Ibid). The main impact covers access, international mobility, university mobility, disruption of research and extension university activities,

deepening Digital Divide, cutback of University operations, transition from higher education to work, etc. (ibid.).

In addition, the data are unstable and dependable from national and cultural factors also (Ibid). Thus, the question of COVID pandemic effect on education is nationally and culturally savvy.

Concerning Ukraine the main problems arising in pandemic times cover quality of education, access to educational resources and internet connection, lack of skills in Computer Use area, security and health protection of teachers and learners, vaccination problems, etc. (Nazarenko, Syrbu & Kogut, 2020). Concerning higher education one can speak about the prevalence of distance (online) and hybrid formats of learning. Also during COVID-19 the movement from traditional pedagogic and andragogic models to heutagogy and cybergogy approaches is fixed (Stukalo & Simakhova, 2020). Heutagogy is considered to be ‘a student-centric learning strategy where learning is determined by the learner’ and encourages self-directed learning. These scholars also specify that learner engagement, innovative approaches, effective education, formative assessment, coherence, consistency and transparency must be among the main priorities in educational community (ibid.: 3667). They argue that “COVID-19 has significant impact on and pushes transformation of the structure of university education in Ukraine. It becomes necessary to modernize teaching methods in universities. And it was the pandemic that gave such an impetus to rapid and effective transformations in the higher education system of Ukraine” (ibid.: 3663).

There is a growing literature on the perception of COVID-19 in Turkey (Artan et al., 2020; Çinar & Küçükali, 2020; Avcı, 2021) and on the fears and anxiety associated with COVID-19 (Dogan, 2020). Despite many families and student made a great effort to adjust to the “new normal”, a qualitative study (Karademir et al, 2020) revealed the negative psychological effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and the distance education on the university students, covering a high level of stress and anxiety as well as fear of getting infected, increasing boredom due to staying at home with family members, and a decrease in motivation to study. Moreover, Turkish university students, in general, had difficulties due to insufficient technological ownership and connectivity problems and they reported adverse effects of distant education format on learning (Karademir et al., 2020).

Nevertheless, these studies are often quantitative and they used attitude scales to examine the perception and attitudes associated with COVID-19 in Turkey. Our study differs from the research cited above in that it uses the method of free association to build a model to examine the perception of COVID-19 in Turkey.

Basing on the theoretic analysis one can organize research in cross-cultural perspective about the perception of pandemic in Turkish and Ukrainian higher education.

The research objective is to reveal and depict the perception of COVID-19 pandemic in the educational community in Ukraine and Turkey and to compare similarities and

differences. The next step is to interpret these differences and similarities by relating to the cultural codes and to macro level social dynamics.

Methods and Techniques of the Research *Методи і процедура дослідження*

We consider that peculiarities of expressing the concept of pandemic in the linguistic consciousness and mentality testify about the inner covered social senses, personal and professional values, ideas and attitudes to this phenomenon in general. It is rendered that one of the most effective instruments for studying in this area is free association test (Goroshko, 2003).

There are two methods – qualitative and quantitative – used in the research. The free association test is selected as qualitative and SPSS handling of data is rendered as quantitative. The combination of psycholinguistic and sociological methods permits speaking about socio-psycholinguistic as a new intersectional area of research or a new discipline that emerged at the cross-road of linguistics, psychology and sociology, studying language as a social phenomenon (Mironova, 2014).

The Ukrainian sample covers 702 persons, 345 females, 320 males and 37 persons are NGA. There are 573 students, 30 teachers, 72 others, and 27 – NGA among them.

The Turkish sample includes 437 persons, 276 females and 161 males, among them 361 students and 75 others and 1 is NGA.

The scheme of research is the following: at the first stage free associative test is conducted. The proposed stimuli list covers “Coronavirus, Covid-19, pandemic, social distance, lockdown, quarantine, mask, PCR tests, self-isolation, vaccine”. The stimuli words are selected as descriptors concerning the COVID concept, or notions most frequent used for describing the state of pandemic.

The instruction for conducting a free associative test online is the following: Participants are asked to answer the first word that comes to their minds when they read the stimulus. All answers are registered in the Google form.

Results *Результати*

We have obtained ten associative fields from Ukrainian respondents and twenty from Turkish. As an example for the analysis we provide the association fields obtained to the noun “pandemic”. All reactions are arranged according to their frequency and unique reactions are not included in the field obtained.

The Ukrainian associative field covers “«→» – 85, Quarantine – 68, Lockdown – 25, Death – 27, Illness – 27, Mass disease, Coronavirus epidemic – 24, Mask – 22, Distribution – 14, Fear, Panic – 12, Covid-19, Danger, House, Isolation – 10, Pandemic, Threat, World, Universe – 9, Virus – 8, Distance learning (*distantzionka*), Horror, Limitation – 8, Chaos, Making progress distribution of infectious disease, People – 7, Cutback of economic activity, Global illness, Whole world – 6, Danger, Self-isolation, To be at a home – 5, Bollocks, Distribution, Evil, Flash, Global, Infection, Intimidation, Large death rate, Limitation – 4, Anarchy, Badly, Catastrophe, Consequence of globalization, Control, Crisis, Distance, Economy, Hospital bunks, Illness, Morbidity, Problems, World problem, Vaccination, World illness - , All is closed, Apocalypse, China, End, For a long time, Lie, Loses, Stuck, Vaccine, 1346-1353 - 2”.

Turkish associative field includes “Pandemic – 44, Lockdown – 31, Restriction – 22, House – 19, Prohibition, Quarantine – 14, Illness, Prohibitions – 11, Mask - 9, Corona, World – 8, Boredom – 7, Covid, Virus – 6, Crisis, Global, Stay indoors – 5, Chaos, Coronavirus, Ennui/Boredom, World wide disease – 4, China, COVID-19, Disaster, Full lockdown, Stay house, Risk, Unemployment – 3, Asociality, Be closed, Be trapped, Borders, Boring, Calamity, Case, Contagious, Contagious disease, Danger, Death, Hard process, I am bored, International, Precaution, Prison life at Home, Process of pandemic, Social isolation, Stress, Struggle for life, Uncertainty – 2”.

Then all fields are planned to go through statistic handling with the help of SPSS software.

Conclusions

Висновки

As one can see negative reactions prevail in both fields, especially concerning the restrictions in personal space.

We fix rejections from associations (no reaction to the proposed stimulus) only in Ukrainian sample. There are practically no words with positive connotations in both fields.

Ukrainian associations emotionally depict the situation in the country and in the world (*anarchy, badly, catastrophe, bollocks, chaos*). Turkish associations are more connected with the prohibition or restriction measures (*prison life at home, social isolation, borders, full lockdown, stay home, prohibition, quarantine*).

Only Ukrainian sample includes one association from the subject area of education (*distance learning (distantzionka)*). There are no associations from the sphere of education in the Turkish sample.

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