G.A. Kuzembayeva¹*, Zh.M. Maigeldiyeva²
¹K. Zhabanov Aktobe Regional University, Aktobe, Kazakhstan;
²Korkyt Ata Kyzylorda University, Kyzylorda, Kazakhstan
(E-mail: kuzembayeva@mail.ru, jmussabek@mail.ru)

Conceptualization of Shame in the Kazakh Linguistic Culture: Psycholinguistic Study

The concept of shame is an integral part of the Kazakh culture and mentality. It embeds in the upbringing of a child and covers the whole life of the representatives of the Kazakh language and culture. The study is aimed at exploring the concept verbally represented by the lexeme “қыр” (shame) in the linguistic culture of the Kazakh nation. Mixed methods research combining lexicographic analysis, semantic and cognitive analysis, and a psycholinguistic experiment was conducted to determine the meaning, content of the concept of shame in the Kazakh language and its impact on daily life and culture of the nation. The participants of a free associative experiment, administered via Google Forms, included 63 representatives of the Kazakh language and culture (19 male, 44 female) aged 17–45 years. The participants of the experiment were asked to provide associations (words that came to their mind as reactions) to the stimulus word “қыр” (shame). The number of associations was not limited. The experimental data were quantitively analyzed and further categorized for modeling the associative field of the concept under study. The results of the study demonstrate how extensive and diverse the concept of shame in the Kazakh linguistic picture of the world is.

Keywords: conceptualization, shame, the Kazakh language, linguistic culture, psycholinguistic study, linguistic consciousness, free associative experiment.

Introduction

There is a growing interest within the anthropocentric paradigm in the investigation of the linguistic worldview [1]. The development of a cognitive approach to language phenomena aided in its comprehension as a source of information on the conceptual or cognitive structures of people’s consciousness [2]. A word is kept in the internal lexicon and occurs in speech not simply as a “sign” of a notion or representation; it carries a weight of associations that are firmly tied to it and arise individually in speech [3].

A new understanding of human behavior has resulted in the reworking of fundamental concepts such as personality, ethnicity, and so on [4]. Peoples’ perception of situation and their subsequent emotional response is dependent on whether it is culturally acceptable and normative to do so, and whether it is functional within the particular sociocultural context [5; 97]. There is a lot of discussion around the concept of shame in various cultures. Shame is a complex emotion and often discussed with reluctance; these feelings are usually incapacitating and unbearable [6]. Some people see it as harm, taking into consideration its excessively archaic content, while others reanimate the concept of shame, considering it the only effective tool in the fight against radicalization. Previous studies have found cultural variation in the frequency and intensity of guilt and shame, in which Japanese participants reported experiencing them more than Americans [7].

The main function of shame is the regulation of social behavior of the individual; being able to experience shame a person becomes more sensitive to the feelings, assessments, and experiences of other people [8]. Shame acts as a force that brings people together [9]. A person who can overcome shame becomes more receptive to other people’s comments and criticism, and criticism, in turn, has its positive aspects and in a constructive way brings benefits. Moreover, shame is important in overcoming challenges and helps in understanding certain aspects of the individual [8].

Shame is a part of Turkic culture and traditions, and it contributes to understanding of who the Kazakhs are. Elder generation used to say “It is a shame” to young people warning them against the unwise steps and the concept of shame passed down from generation to generation.

Today, in the context of globalization when the borders have expanded and most traditions have faded [10], it is important to investigate the conceptualization of the cultural concept of shame in the picture of the world of the Kazakhs. We can assume that there are some changes in the understanding and experience of shame nowadays, which may be associated with a sharp change in values. Thus, the study is aimed at ex-

*Corresponding author’s e-mail: kuzembayeva@mail.ru
ploring the concept verbally represented by the lexeme “ұят” (shame) in the linguistic culture of the Kazakh nation. The study results will add to an in-depth understanding of shame in the Kazakh linguistic culture and consciousness, and will contribute to the effective cross-cultural communication.

Materials and methods

In this respect, we overtook the investigation of the conceptualization of shame in the Kazakh linguistic culture by means of the complex of linguistic and psycholinguistic methods. The current study manipulated the research methods such as lexicographic analysis, a universal method which being interrelated with the theory, enriches and develops it, provides a large amount of dictionary material and “collective wisdom”, semantic and cognitive analysis explaining a word and moving towards a knowledge about the world [11], and a psycholinguistic method of a free associative experiment.

A free associative experiment was carried out among the representatives of the Kazakh language and culture. The experiment was administered via Google Forms, which allowed creating a poll for the mass sending of questionnaires to e-mail addresses and social networks of the respondents. Sixty-three respondents (19 male, 44 female) aged 17–45 years took part in the experiment. The participants of the experiment were asked to provide associations (words that came to their mind as reactions) to the stimulus word “ұят” (shame). The number of associations was not limited. The experimental data were quantitively analyzed and further categorized for modelling the associative field of the concept under study.

Results and discussion

Based on the lexicographic analysis the following definitions of the lexeme “ұят” in the dictionary of the Kazakh language were revealed:

1. Қатынас мәдениетіндегі ненің жақсы, немесе қатынас қатынасын бекіту / A good quality of human, honour, knowledge of what is good and what is bad in the communication of people;
2. Адамның ұждан мен қоғамдағы моральдық принциптерге үйлеспейтіні, жағымсыз, теріс қылық жасаған кезде байқалып тұру / Something which does not comply with moral principles, a feeling observed when doing negative things; 3. Жақсы қылық жасаған кезде байқалып тұру / Something wrong is done; 4. Намыс, адамдардың қарым-қатынасы / A good quality of human, honour, knowledge of what is good and what is bad in the communication of people;

The phrases бейбастақ іс істелді / Something wrong is done; ұяқа қалды / Not proper; ұятқа қалды / caused a shameful situation; қыймет, адамдардың қарым-қатынасы / revealed; ұятқа қалды / revealed; ұятының жақсы / was deprived of shame; ұятының ағынды / stepped over shame; ұятының жапырғы / something improper is done.

Shame is an important part of upbringing in the Kazakh culture and the religion of Islam beginning from the early period of a child. Kazakh people use the word “ұят” (shame) in different situations saying “ұят болады”. The phrase can be transferred into the English language only in the context of different situations. A lot of examples can be provided to describe the meaning of the phrase “ұят болады”, as the Kazakhs use it in various setting. It can be used even when they are afraid to tell the truth or false and when they are afraid to put somebody to a shame situation and to preserve peace and unity: “It will be a shame, do not do …”, “Would not be a shame if I will…”, “It will be a shame even if I am right”, “I am afraid to put somebody in a shame situation”. The Kazakhs used to appreciate their culture and positive attitude. It is a shame not to know family ancestors in the Kazakh tradition and the phrase “it will be a shame” makes the Kazakhs know their relatives and seven grandfathers. Day by day, the younger generation is reminded of the importance of culture and traditions by the older generation. The traditions and culture being a highest value in the Kazakh society are treated from the perspectives of shame.

The phraseological corpus of the language is the mirror in which a linguocultural community identifies its national self-consciousness [13]. Cultural-national connotation of phraseological units plays a significant role in the reproduction of the commonplace mentality [14]. The phraseological stock of the language conceptualizes not only the knowledge about naive picture of the world and all the types of the subject’s attitude to its fragments but the usage of these language entities and the intergeneration transmittance of standards and stereotypes of the national culture” [13; 14]. In this respect, the analysis of the phraseological corpus containing the lexeme “ұят” (shame) was carried out.
All Kazakhs grow up by reading Abay’s works about morality, faith and conscience. According to Abay, «Рухани әлемнің қайнар көзі — білім, ғылым, адамгершілік пен ақыл, ар-ұят, яғни адамның рухани байлығы» / The source of the spiritual world is knowledge, science, morality and intellect, conscience, that is, the spiritual wealth of a person (translated by the authors). In Abay’s teaching, the word “conscience” is referred to the Kazakh word “ар-ұят” which is directly translated into English as “shame”. In this respect we can assume that an intellectual person with high morals never does shameful things, and Abay directs us to be a well-educated and good person, who is able to appreciate others’ opinions and decisions.

In one of his words of wisdom, Abay quoted the hadith: “Whoever is ashamed to have faith” [15]. The word “shame” is one of the most comprehensive and profound words. This is one of the most studied concepts of Sharia. Wisdom of the Kazakhs combines with Sharia. Shame is a branch of faith, a manifestation of Islamic behavior. If the feelings of shame occupy a special place in a person’s soul, then this shows the beauty and a high degree of human adherence to the path of Islam. Shame is a characteristic of God’s prophets who were sent to earth to share the truth and set an example. According to the associate of Abu Sayyid al-Khudri, “the feeling of shame of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) was greater than the girl sitting behind the curtain. If the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) saw something shameful, we would know that he was ashamed looking at his face. This truthfulness of the prophets is one of the characteristics of the righteous servants of God who have dedicated their lives to it. The presence or absence of shame is a sign of the true nature of a person. Shame is a virtue that strengthens a person’s faith and character. If a person is embarrassed by one action and his ace turns pink due to an inappropriate action, then his name and soul are pure [16].

The Kazakh proverb says: Өлімнен ұят күшті / Shame is stronger than death. For a conscientious person, shame has a special place. Our ancestors said “Because of a sense of shame, I almost fell into a hole in the ground”. Therefore, shame is a noble quality, incompatible with human behavior that keeps people from doing bad things, encourages them to do well and makes them hate evil. According to S. Sarayi, “Ұятсыз адам іттен де жасамай” / A shameless person is worse than a dog. Such sayings guide a new growing generation to the right direction.

As a result of the associative experiment conducted among the speakers of the Kazakh language aimed at investigating the content and the structure of the concept shame in the Kazakh linguistic consciousness 222 associative responses were received. 338 cognitive features of the concept were identified, 12 of which were stated once (Table 1).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reaction</th>
<th>Quantity</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Тәрблаг (upbringing)</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ар-ұждан (honour)</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Уялшактык (shyness)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Иман (religion)</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>5.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Өңгімелу (to talk)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Менталитет (mentality)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Оссет (advice)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Кіреп тесік таппау (not to find a hole to enter / to feel ashamed)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Шыныштылық (sincerity)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ата-ана (parents)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ар-намыс (conscience)</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>17.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Тәрбиесіз (ill-mannered)</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Керек емес (not needed)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Болмайды, ұят болады (you are not allowed, it is a shame)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Біздің менталитетімізге жат (does not comply with our mentality)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Казақ бөлмөс (Kazakh tradition)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Мәңгіз эран (important)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Қыз баласы (girl)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Мәдениетсіздік (lack of culture)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Тәрбиесіздік (ill-mannered)</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Имансыздық (impiety)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.35</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Based on the frequency of lexical associations, the core (identified by reactions from more than 20 subjects), the near periphery (10–20 reactions), the far periphery (<10 reactions), and the outer periphery (individual associations) were determined (Table 2).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Centre</th>
<th>ar-намыс (conscience) 39, тәрбие (upbringing) 20, ар-ұждан (honour) 20, тәрбиесіз (ill-mannered) 20.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Near periphery 10–20</td>
<td>iman (religion) 13, субханаллах дұрыс емес (subhanallah incorrect) 10.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Far periphery less than 10</td>
<td>надандық (ignorance) 8, кореңді / білімді (learned) 8, тәрбиесіздік (ill-mannered) 7, мәдениет (culture) 7, шылдық (shyness) 6, ата-ана (parents) 6, адамгершілік (humanity) 5, кірерге тесік таппау (not to find a hole to enter/to feel ashamed) 5, шиншылық (sincerity) 5, ұждау (Kazakh tradition) 4, қыз баласы (girl) 4, осет (advice) 3, ұялшақтық (not to realize expectations) 3, мәдениетсіздік (ill-mannered) 2, қыз баласы (girl) 2, ата-ана (parents) 2.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outer periphery Individual associations</td>
<td>өзінің (to talk), көзім (not needed), біздің менталитетімізге жат (does not comply with our mentality), ұялшақтық (not to realize expectations) 3, мәдениетсіздік (ill-mannered) 2, қыз баласы (girl) 2, ата-ана (parents) 2.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: authors’ elaboration based on the word association test

As stated in the Table 2, the shame is primarily associated with conscience (17.6%), upbringing (9%), and honour (9%). The associative field shame in the Kazakh linguistic consciousness was further interpreted and categorized into the clusters forming the semantic zones. The following semantic zones were formed:

**Moral qualities** (38.7%): ar-намыс (conscience) 39, ар-ұждан (honour) 20, иман (religion) 13, шылығ (sincerity) 5, адамгершілік (humanity) 5, ой, жан және тіл тәрізді (purity of thought, soul and language), сабыр (patience), шукіршілік (thanksgiving), кішіпейілдік (simplicity);

**Education** (16.67%): тәрбие (upbringing 20, кореңді / білімді (learned) 8, мәдениет (culture) 7, кешірім, кешірімді болу (to forgive) 2;
Negative implications (27.5%): тәрбиесіз (ill-mannered) 20, субханаллак дұрыс емес (subhanallah incorrect) 10, надандық (ignorance) 8, тәрбиесіздік (ill-mannered) 7, кірерге тесік таппай (not to find a hole to enter / to feel ashamed) 5, ұялұстан (lack of culture) 3, имансыздық (impiety) 3, ата-анаға және қыз баласы (girl) 4; әңгіме / салмақ (advice) 3, болмайды, ұя болады (you are not allowed, it is shame) 3, ешкімнің ала жібін аттамау (not to do harm) 3, мәдениет (mentality) 2, олымен ұя күшті (death is better than shame) 2, ұяғық — тәрбиесіз, тығым, иман, ішкіт қызылық (humbleness — education, taboo, goodness), керек емес (not needed), біздің мәдениеттімізге жат (does not comply with our mentality), маңызы зор (important), табиғатымызға жат (does not comply with our nature).

Conclusion

We aimed at exploring the concept of shame verbally represented by the lexeme “ұя” in the linguistic culture of the Kazakh language and culture bearers. Mixed methods research combining lexicographic analysis, semantic and cognitive analysis and a psycholinguistic experiment was conducted to determine the meaning, content of the concept of shame in the Kazakh linguistic and to understand its impact on daily life and culture of the ethn. The study results show that shame is an integral part of the Kazakh culture and mentality. Shame is present in the whole life of Kazakhs starting from childhood and exists in every step of the Kazakhs.

The concept of shame, as comes out from the research results, is extensive in the Kazakh linguistic consciousness. Shame is something sacred in the Kazakh linguistic culture and inviolable for society. Shame is closely related to conscience, education, religion and upbringing of younger generation in the culture of the Kazakh nation. Two types of attitudes and perception of shame among young generation of the Kazakhs can be noticed: (1) “no need to be in a shameful situation or cause it” and (2) “no need to speak of shame” as it is against our mentality and against our nature.

Acknowledgements

The research is funded by the Science Committee of the Ministry of Higher Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan (Grant No. AP13268778).

References

Conceptualization of Shame in Kazakh...


Information about the authors

Kuzembayeva, Gulzhana Aitzhanovna – PhD, Associate Professor, K. Zhubanov Aktobe Regional University, Aktobe, Kazakhstan. E-mail: kuzembayeva@mail.ru;

Maigeldiyeva, Zhannat Mussabekovna – Candidate of philological sciences, Associate Professor, Korkyt Ata Kyzylorda University, Kyzylorda, Kazakhstan. E-mail: jmussabek@mail.ru.