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## COLOUR TERM "WHITE" AND EMOTIONS IN ENGLISH

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*The research analysis the results of an experiment conducted to check what feelings are associated with white colour in British English culture.*

The first thought which we have when examining the relationship between colour and emotions is that both of these phenomena are indispensable parts of human life. The world which surrounds us is full of colours and our emotional attitude towards the objects of everyday life is very often conditioned by their colour.

Our **hypothesis** is as follows: colours affect our emotions and feelings and this can be reflected in the way people think and use the language. We are going to examine the relationship between colour term "white" and emotions through a study conducted with native speakers of English. For the purpose of the research we examine the colour term "white" in English, using the data obtained by Anna Mozolewskaya, a research worker from Poland. Her method of investigation was very simple. In Great Britain her questionnaire was presented to both men and women of approximately similar age: 20–30 years old. The questionnaire was filled in by 50 native speakers of English, mostly students. It was an open questionnaire and the question asked was: What emotions do you associate with "white" colour? There was enough space left for the answers, and the subjects were requested to write down their associations. When studying the results of the experiments, only the associations were of importance. Neither the sex nor the age of the subjects were taken into consideration. We plan to examine them during our further research into colours. It needs to be noted that the responses were not grammatically uniform. Very few were presenting their associations only in their noun form. Besides, since the respondents were free to provide as many associations as they would, the number of answers are distinctly unequal.

The highest percentage of the English-speaking respondents associated "white" with *calmness* and *peacefulness*, while *purity* and *cleanness* scored the second highest rates. As regards other positive associations *innocence* scored the third rates (6 per cent). Besides, almost as many attributed *happiness/joy* and *goodness* to "white". Additionally, the English – speaking subjects mentioned such emotional attitudes as *sincerity* and *honesty*. As far as negative emotions are concerned, in 16 percent of the English-speaking subjects "white" evokes *emptiness* and *solitude*. For another 14 percent subjects "white" means *alienation*. Furthermore, 16 percent of the English-speaking informants associate "white" with *coldness* and *lack of feeling*. 8% of the subjects point to *sadness* and *depression*, and another 8 per cent, have associations with *fear*.

The below table presents the complete list of associations mentioned by our subjects.

There are Russian and Belarusian informants who class associations from group № 2 (emptiness, solitude, alienation, etc.) as entirely negative. But native English subjects normally interpret solitude and alienation as positive or neutral respectively. This makes it possible to conclude that associations of "white" are culture specific. In our further research we are going to find out how Belarusians perceive the colour term "white" and specify how distinct their perception is. Summing up the data, obtained in the research under discussion we can admit, that in English culture "white" is mainly positive (84% of all associations) and it evokes very important feelings or emotions, such as purity, cleanness, happiness, joy and goodness, cleanness, innocence, honesty, peacefulness, sincerity. The list of the words, mentioned as positive associations, by the British subjects seem positive to Belarusian informants too, with very few exceptions. We may conclude that the assumption that language significantly influences human thought may have some allowances. Human thinking complies with certain universal perceptual and cognitive preferences of human beings.

Table – Associations evoked by "white" in English speaking subjects

Association	Percentage of subjects	Percentage of answers
Calmness/peacefulness	36	22
Purity/cleanness	20	12
Coldness/lack of feeling	16	10
Emptiness/solitude	16	10
Melancholy/depression	8	5
fear	8	5
innocence	6	4
Happiness/joy	6	4
Sincerity/honesty	4	2
Heavenliness	4	2
Goodness	4	2
Neutrality	4	2
Boredom	4	2
Other associations		18
		100

## REFERENCES

1. Mozolewska, A. Colour terms and emotions in English and Polish / A. Mozolewska. – Beyond Philology. – 2010. – № 7. – P. 77–102.