Definitions of Words in Everyday Communication: Associative Meaning from the Pragmatic Point of View

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Abstract

In their interactions with others, people try to be cooperative if they want to be understood by their interlocutor(s). Spontaneous speech presupposes a good command of the language in use, but the overall meaning of certain words, their recognizability (visibility), is closely connected with the associations that the real-world objects they denote or the words themselves have acquired and are true for particular social groups. In the word-based games of the original TV show *Hollywood Game Night* and its Greek version *Celebrity Game Night*, the players provide their associations with the objects of reality in question or the words denoting them in order to convey the information effectively. The results of this research comprise an overview of how speakers of different languages process and understand words, and how different associations and verbalizations can be not only among languages but also among those who speak the same language but belong to different social groups. The analysis of these associations allows us to explain which elements of the information they provide can help us to understand each other correctly, which are the factors that make interlocutors choose this or that association, and why sometimes they fail to elicit the information they ask for, to explain what they mean.

Keywords: salience, association, associative meaning, definition of words, communication, English, Modern Greek, semantic

1 Introduction

Since 2013 the television show *Hollywood Game Night* has run on NBC (USA) so successfully that some channels from other countries decided to buy the rights to broadcast it. The Greek Channel Mega in 2014-2018 has produced 57 episodes (as of May 19, 2018) of the localized Greek version of the US show, called *Celebrity Game Night*.

In each episode two teams consisting of one player and three celebrities compete for a money prize by playing various games with words, music, pantomime and so on. In some of the games the host or participants are to elicit a pre-determined target word/expression from others by giving them clues. The target words/expressions in the TV show are embedded in some semantic or formal frame. Specifically, they either belong to a thematic topic, which the host gives, or they are words beginning with a particular letter, also given by the host.

Within the present research the following word-based games are analyzed. *Clue-boom* is a game with a specified topic in which clue-givers choose a card with a word/expression from a bowl and provide the players on their team with clues which they think can help elicit the word. In the game *Take the hint* (called in the Greek version *Πες μου μία λέξη*, 'Tell me a word') the captain of the team has to guess the word/expression presented on the screen behind him/her based on clues the team members provide. One player each time can give a clue consisting of one word only. In the game with a specified topic. *Off the top of my head* (called in the Greek version *Εδώ τόχω*, 'Here I have it') the players wear special glasses where a card with a target word/expression written on it is placed, and

then provide each other with clues to elicit the target words/expressions. In the game *Where are you going?* (called in the Greek version *Πού πας*, meaning the same as the English title) one player of the team becomes the driver of an imaginary car. The host shows team members the card with the target word on it. He/she pretends to get in the car and tries to explain to the driver where they are going.

Sometimes a player-guesser names the predetermined word/expression at once, sometimes two, three and more clues are needed, and there are also times when the target word/expression remains unrecognized, i.e. not elicited. This clearly means that whether or not participants name the target word/expression successfully depends crucially on particular verbalizations. The explanations have to be short, and present the most recognizable features of the object in question so that the clues the clue-givers provide, hypothetically, are the most salient features of the real-world object in question. Therefore they are supposed to be those most closely associated with them, logically or, more often, subconsciously.

Thus the concern of the present research is to trace the reasons for both positive and negative outcomes of these word-based games by means of semantic analysis of the clues provided and the words/expressions elicited, and through analysis of participants' mini-dialogues, taking into consideration the communicative and social characteristics of the interlocutors. The paper is therefore intended as a specific contribution to the development of social and cognitive semiotics and pragmatics. The material analyzed can also be considered fieldwork, as those words-clues are spontaneous but stimulus-based elicitations.

2 Associations in the focus of scholarly research

The term "association" was coined in 1690 by John Locke, who offered the concept of the association of ideas, namely that ideas are interconnected, sequential and descriptive of experience due to "the psychological tendency to associate ideas through experience" ("John Locke" 2017). And in the 18th century an English doctor, David Hartley, in his book *Observations on Man*, represented the associations among ideas as a universal mechanism of mental life, thus marking the start of association psychology. Hartley sought to explain how the most complex mental processes – imagining, remembering, reasoning – might be analyzed into clusters or sequences of elementary sense impressions, and that ultimately all psychological acts might be explained by a single law of association. ("David Hartley" 2014). Since then psychology has dealt with associations, which are considered as links among objects based on our personal subjective experience. Associations have been a matter of concern for many well-known scholars, including A. Potebnia, Baudouin de Courtenay, M. Kruszewski, R. G. Kent, G. Miller, and Ch. Cofer, among others, who dealt with associations from both a psychological and linguistic perspective.

Neuroscientists have proved that "object categorization is an adaptive function of the brain, allowing organisms to sort information from the external world into behaviorally relevant classes" (Bao, Raguet, Cole, Howard, & Gottfried 2016). Sensory systems "generalize across different objects sharing similar features, but at the same time maintain the specificity of individual objects and categories" (Bao, Raguet, Cole, Howard, & Gottfried 2016). Sensory inputs are associated with "internal templates that are established through a lifetime of experience and encoded into memory" (Bao, Raguet, Cole, Howard, & Gottfried 2016). This experience can coincide with the experience of the culture we belong to (i.e. the experience is shared by all the people in touch with a particular culture), though the experience always remains personal, lived by the person himself/herself.

So, associations are a way to keep information in the memory of its speakers. There is a belief that the quality of memory increases as associative thinking develops, as verbal memory plays an important

role in remembering words and images whose analogues, namely abstract notions, do not have access to. When a person wants to say something, he/she searches for connections between objective reality and its perception. Verbal memory is to a certain extent opposed to image memory. Image memory is a depository of unprocessed raw images which keep correlations of their spatial characteristics, while verbal memory is based on the encoding of notions. This is why words and expressions are stored in the memory not as separate elements, but in groups or networks. Phenomena of reality are thus defined by their relationships to other concepts rather than by some internal essence. And the strengths of the connections correspond to a stable pattern of activity distributed over the whole network.

3 Salience as a reliable criterion for choosing appropriate associations

When the clue-givers in this show are faced with having to choose a word or expression to provide as a clue, they have to activate the available choices, clues which they believe will best help the guesser to find the word in question, and if there are many choices, their ranking. The word or phrase is then selected for utterance on the basis of maximum salience, and thus the most recognizable characteristics of the real-world object in question.

The clue-giver has to take into consideration and evaluate to what extent the person he/she addresses is familiar with the association field of the target word, and with the ranking within the set of associates. The clue-giver thus has to decide whether this person knows the inherently salient feature of the object in question, and then evaluate the distance between meanings and decide which of the salient features are more relevant for a particular guesser, what is his/her probable background knowledge, and the extent to which the guesser is aware of a collective perception and representation of the object in question. In other words, s/he must assess the accessibility of the target word. Words with stronger connections between a clue and the target or stronger shared associate links are more likely to be recovered:

Similarly, words that appear infrequently in the language, that have more connections among their associations, and that have relatively smaller sets of associations are more likely to be recovered regardless of the retrieval intention of the speaker (Nelson & Goodmon 2002: 393).

The analysis of the clues provided and words elicited in the show reveals that the successful eliciting of a pre-determined word/expression mainly depends on successful assumptions of likely mutual knowledge and reference to the most salient feature of the object of the reality in question. According to I. Kecskes:

As a semiotic notion salience refers to the relative importance or prominence of signs, in pragmatics when we speak about salient information we mean given information that the speaker assumes to be in central place in the hearer's consciousness when the speaker produces the utterance. It is the most probable out of all possible. (2014: 1)

The most salient feature of the object of reality is the one we personally encounter most often, while the social group we belong to has agreed on a particular conceptualization of this object. The salience of different aspects of a word's meaning is determined by its frequency in participants' mental lexicon, and by the strength of the shared associations engendered by its real-world familiarity, conventionality and prototypicality (Giora 2003: 10).

When choosing a clue, the clue-giver has to take into consideration the current "reality" of the interlocutor. Both clue-giver and guesser have to share the same cultural space, to be closely connected with the players' current "reality", or their cultural space. The more frequent, familiar, conventional, and prototypical the meaning, the quicker it is to retrieve (Giora 2003: 16-17). As such, "salient

information includes several factors that might make it 'feel right': it springs to mind first, it is familiar, it is likeable and it resists change (it is hard to eradicate or attenuate)" (Giora 2003: 199).

4 Classification of associations

Grouping of the clues found in the show turned out to be a difficult task. There are various classifications of verbal associations based on different criteria. Aristotle distinguished three types of associations, namely associations of contiguity, similarity and contrast. The Russian scholar G. Martynovich, based on the formal, functional and semantic characteristics of responses retrieved in an association experiment, distinguishes only two types of associations, namely those of contiguity (in time or space) and those of similarity, claiming that they embrace all the other classifications of associations. For him the associations of contiguity are associations of metonymic character, pairs of words which are connected thematically. Such pairs of words comprise semantic groups of hyponyms-hyperonyms, meronyms and holonyms, and the types of figurative speech – metonymy and synecdoche. Associations of similarity are associations of metaphoric character, as they appear between objects which have one or several common essential features. Similarity of content of verbal associations, i.e. similarity of lexical meanings, implies that in the meaning of associations there are common semes (semata). They can be synonyms or antonyms, but most often they are pairs of words, where the semantic content of one comprises a part of the content of another: usually here belong words which act as modifiers often used with the other word in a pair. Alternatively, these may be pairs of words, which have in their content at least one common essential feature. But some pairs of words can be simultaneously associations of contiguity and similarity (Martynovich 1997: 5-6). Just like in our case, as most of our clues are associations of contiguity. We thus have to choose some other criteria.

In this respect the classification by C. Jung and F. Riklin, who carried out the series of experiments on subjects, turns out to be more relevant for our material. They suggested distinguishing the following types of associations: internal and external associations, sound reactions, miscellaneous, ego-centric reactions, perseveration, repetition of the reaction and linguistic connection (Jung & Riklin 2014).

5 The material of the present research

Our material of 300 target words/expressions in English and 300 in Greek with clues consisting of one to 25 words each, is received on the basis of transcriptions of videos of verbal interactions between players of the show in the games described earlier.

According to the rules of the show there are some restrictions: neither translation equivalents, nor cognate words can be provided as clues. There is also a time limit of 90 seconds (for each game for each team). This factor by no means diminishes the value of our research, as the time is not so crucial for perception and production of information as it may seem. According to the latest research carried out by neuroscientists from the University of Berkeley (Haller et al. 2018), the human brain needs only several seconds to respond to visual or aural stimuli. It has even been proved experimentally that the brain already begins to prepare for a response at the stage of perceiving stimuli, that is it is ready to answer before even knowing what to respond. But acting under time pressure the clue-givers more often provide those clues which appear in their minds first, and only behave otherwise if they take more seconds or in the course of the interaction choose more suitable clues. Besides, in such a stressful situation some people turn out not to be ready psychologically to quickly react in general, due to their personal characteristics.

Unlike association experiments, when participants are asked to give word responses to stimulus words/expressions for the sake of an experiment, in the TV show the clues-responses are provided with the aim of successful communication leading to earning points and money. Furthermore, the elicitations in the show are the result of the guesser's analysis of the clues given, and this allows us to examine whether associations are common among different people/groups of people/languages and to characterize associations judging by the success of communicative interaction. The clues comprise semantic constituents of the target words/expressions, either single words or utterances describing the object the target word/expression denotes, and chosen among other possible variants due to pragmatic scope.

6 Types of association used for defining target words from a pragmatic point of view

Taking this into consideration, Giora's classification of types of salience allows us to group all the clues into inherent associations (features comprising an unchanging characteristic of the object in question, as denoted by the target word/expression), acquired/external associations (based on information stored in the brain of the members of a particular social group), and emergent situational associations (unstored information) (Giora 2003: 7). It should be mentioned, however, that those three types can coexist, as clue-givers can provide all those associations simultaneously in the games, with communicative interaction in the form of a dialogue between participants.

6.1 Inherent associations

6.1.1 Constant characteristics or attributes

The analysis of the clues provided reveals that the most recognizable features, those comprising inherent associations, are constant characteristics of the objects in question, indivisible, integral, and inseparable due to their origin, whether natural or as a result of the activity of people. This can be a part of the body of a living being or of an inanimate object, accompanied by some more specific characteristics (e.g. *peacock – tail, colorful; Pinocchio – nose, long; beaver – teeth, dam; ghost – scary, sheet; zebra – stripes, looks like horse; message – bird, twitter; δέντρα – φύλλα* "trees – leaves"*; ποδήλατο – πετάλια* "bicycle – pedals"; *ελέφαντας – προβοσκίδα* "elephant – trunk"*; φίδι – δαγκώνει, μία γλώσσα μεγάλη* "snake – bites, a long tongue"; *θρόνος – βασιλιάς* "throne – king", etc.) or it can be just a recognizable attribute of the object in question, as it is its symbol, or an integral, inherent part of it, like *pumpkin* for *Halloween, kangaroo* for *Australia, the maple leaf* for *Canada,* or *the pyramids* for *Egypt*, *turkey* and *stuffing* for *Thanksgiving Day, το ηφαίστειο – η Σαντορίνη* "volcano – Santorini", *το Κολοσσαίο στην Ιταλία* "the Colosseum in Italy"*, η Βηθλεέμ – ο Χριστός* "Bethlehem – Christ"*, τράπεζα – λεφτά* "bank – money"*, δωμάτιο – έχει μέσα το σπίτι* "room – a house has inside", and so on. In this respect one interesting association should be mentioned. In the Greek show for the target word *μανιτάρι* "mushroom" the successful clue *Στρουμφάκια* "the Smurfs" was given, probably because those fictional creatures known from comics live in houses in the form of mushrooms, and the particular clue-giver made an assumption that the guesser was familiar with these characters. To be sure the target word would be named successfully, the clue-giver also specified what exactly was meant by providing the hyperonym *φαγητό* "food". The inherent characteristic of the object the target word denotes can be a color, a shape, an origin, and so on, expressed with adjectives, or via other descriptions. Like *Kool-aid,* which is a brand of flavored drink mix and can be easily distinguished among other drinks by its colors *Kool-aid blue/red,* or a taxi, which is yellow in the USA. In the American show the hypo-hyperonymic relations are more often presented as clues, which are rare in the Greek version, like for example, *fox – animal in woods, usually scares people, red, you make*

fur. Some objects which do not necessarily comprise an integral part of American or Greek culture but are widespread among the citizens of these countries are even presented in the same way. Compare *donut – is a round thing you eat in pastry, very delicious round sprinkles, they have a hole in the middle* and *κρουασάν – έχει το σχήμα του φεγγαριού, είναι γλυκό, το τρώμε με τον καφέ* "croissant has the shape of the moon, it is sweet, we eat it with coffee".

6.1.2 A function as an integral characteristics of the object

In both American and Greek versions clue-givers present the target object by means of verbs, describing how the object functions/works, what it is used for, or which action makes it possible for the object in question to exist*: egg – a chicken makes; zoo – all the available animals live there; napkin – you use it to wipe yourself when you eat; rice – Chinese people grow it; ο θερμοσίφωνας – το ανάβουμε για να έχουμε ζεστό νερό* "boiler – we switch it on to have warm water"*; οδοντίατρος – εκεί πας να κάνεις σφράγισμα* "dentist – you go there to fill a tooth"*; τρακτέρ – το οδηγούν οι αγρότες* "tractor – farmers drive this"*; όσπρια – τα τρώμε, φακες* "legumes – we eat them, lens"*; εκκλησία – πάμε εκεί να προσευχηθούμε* "church – we go there to pray"*; δράκος – βγάζει φωτιές, μυθικό πλάσμα* "dragon – belches flames, mythical being"*; ρολόι – στο χέρι μας φοράμε και βλέπουμε την ώρα* "watch – we wear it on our wrist and see the time"*; ψηφοδέλτιο – το πετάω μέσα στην κάλπη* "ballot paper – I put it in a ballot box", and so on. In this respect one experiment is worth mentioning, carried out on Russian language speakers, which showed that such syntagmatic associations are mostly provided by children ("chair – I sit"), while elderly people use paradigmatic associations ("chair – table") (Nikolayeva 2008).

The fact of providing these sort of clues, which are easier for production and comprehension, may be explained on the one hand by the findings of recent research in psycholinguistics, while on the other hand may actually turn out to support such findings. According to the data collected by means of on-site fieldwork on English, Dutch and other languages, speakers tend to slow down before saying nouns compared with verbs. The researchers "attribute this slowdown effect to the increased amount of planning that nouns require compared with verbs", and suggest that "there are robust universals of language processing that are intimately tied to how speakers manage referential information when they communicate with one another" (Seifart et al. 2018).

6.1.3 Association by contrast

The most salient feature of the object in question may also be identified by means of the name of the object (or its inherent feature), usually opposed to the object the target word/expression denotes: for example, the compass point of "North Pole" is represented as "not South" in both American and Greek versions of the show. Other examples: *nurse – not a doctor; dogs – not cats; CNN – not Fox News, but...; sorority – not a fraternity, but...; αριθμοί – όχι τα γράμματα, τα άλλα που μαθαίνουν* "numbers – not letters, the other things they (children) learn"*; μαμάδες – όχι μπαμπάδες* "mothers – not fathers"*; υψος – όχι βάθος* "height – not depth"*; ελικόπτερο – όχι αεροπλάνο* "helicopter – not airplane", etc.

Sometimes providing the most salient feature, which seems to be true for all people acquainted with a particular object in their reality, does not secure a successful outcome, as languages name these objects in a different way. So from the conceptual, notional point of view, such clues correspond to reality, but from a linguistic point of view, taking into consideration the rules of the game, they cannot be provided. For example, in the Greek version of the show the clues given for the word *πεπόνι* "melon" were *κίτρινο, καρπούζι, αντίθετο* "yellow", "watermelon" (a non-cognate word in Greek) and "opposite". But in the American show the attempt to provide a clue "melon" for the target word

"watermelon" was not successful, as in English it is a cognate word, which is not allowed according to the rules.

6.1.4 Multiplicity of associations

In most cases inherent associations provided as clues work well, and players name the target words/expressions correctly. But there are also cases when those associations are inherent for several objects, and a clue-giver fails to make it clear for a guesser which exact word/expression has to be named. For example, for the target word *Mozart*, the following clues have been provided: *Αυστρία* "Austria"*, μουσική* "music"*, Μπαχ* "Bach" and the guesser infers *Βιέννη* "Vienna". Or the target word *Βρυξέλλες* "Brussels", the city being an embodiment of the Greeks' sufferings, as all the demands of the EU come from its headquarters situated here. So the clues provided for this target word are *Βέλγιο* "Belgium"*, ευρωβουλευτές* "Euro-MP"*, συνθηκη* "treaty"*, κονέ* "connection, nepotism". The response of the guesser based on these clues was *κοινοβούλιο* "Parliament". The clues provided for the target word *cactus* in the American version of the game were *plant* and *desert*, while in the Greek version *τεκίλα* "tequila"*, αγκάθια* "thorns"*, έρημος* "desert". In the American version the word was successfully elicited, while in the Greek version the player gave the answer *Mexico* due to the abundant and inappropriate clues provided – a parallel situation to that with the opposites mentioned above. Some objects can be associated simultaneously with more than one object, thus there can be more than one pair of opposites accentuating various aspects. In this case, clues have to be more specific to single out the target object, and features inherent to it, thus distinguishing it from other possible responses. For example, the reaction of the guesser to the clue *όχι γάτες* "not cats" was *σκύλοι* "dogs", while the guesser wanted to elicit *ποντίκια* "mice".

6.2 Acquired associations

Acquired or external associations represent the particular picture of the "world" of a particular people. To this group belong either target words naming the objects of American or Greek reality, and so clues are also connected with it, or clue-givers may choose clues specific to their particular reality to successfully elicit the target word/expression. As such, we next distinguish extralinguistic associations and linguistic associations.

6.2.1 Extralinguistic associations

When words denote some objects or actions closely connected with the traditions, (social) customs and manners, history and culture of the particular ethnos (including those which became known for other ethne), they acquire some additional meanings and consequently other associations. For example, the target word *flowers* being an obligatory attribute of a marriage proposal can be associated with the particular social situation, and so we find it presented as *I propose to you with*. For the target word *δαμάσκηνο* "plum" the clue-giver provided the clue connected with the belief that this fruit helps with digestion, *το τρώμε όταν είμαστε δυσκοίλιοι "*we eat it when we have constipation". One of the destinations in the game "Where are you going?" was *Συρία* "Syria", and the clue-giver presented it as *εκτός Ελλάδος, κάπου μακριά, από κει έρχονται οι άνθρωποι με τα σωσσίβια* "outside Greece, somewhere far, people in life-jackets are coming from there". In the game with the given topic "Economy" the target word *Τρόϊκα* "European troika", denoting the commission inspecting Greece, with the word having negative connotations for the Greek speakers, is presented as *δε μας αρέσει όταν έρχεται αυτή και μας κάνει ελέγχους* "we don't like it coming and checking". The guesser thought of *εφορία* "tax office", so specification was needed, *απ'έξω* "from abroad", and the word was successfully elicited. The target word *μέτρο* "underground" in the Greek show was presented as *μέσο* "means"

and *Συγγρού-Φιξ* "Sygrou-Fix" which is a metro station in Athens. The target word *ρίγανη* "oregano", denoting a herb widely used in Greece, was presented through its connection with the most Greek salad, which is known as village salad, *στη χωριάτικη βάζουμε ντομάτα, πράσινο από πάνω, ψιλό* "we add to the village (Greek) salad tomatoes, the green above, thin". In the American show for the target word *beaver*, the clue-giver provided words which describe inherent characteristics of this animal, namely *teeth*, *wood*, and *dam,* which beavers build to create ponds, but for some reason the guesser named *Abraham Lincoln*. The thing is that the clues "teeth" and "wood" in fact present the animal beaver. But the word "beaver" used with the word "dam" comprises a part of the name of the Battle of Beaver Dam Creek, which took place in 1862, shortly after Abraham Lincoln became US President.

6.2.2 Linguistic associations

The clue-givers provide not only clues presenting the most recognizable feature of the target object in reality, as some are connected with specific verbalizations characteristic for the particular language. It should be mentioned here that salience as a phenomenon, according to our analysis, is connected not only with the object itself – and the characteristics provided by the players are not always characteristics of the object as of physical substance, which have tangible presence like color or shape. Here we probably have to talk about linguistic salience, when the object of reality is recognized through the words which are usually used with the word denoting it, because of its lexical collocations, its compatibility. The Russian scientist Y. Karaulov referred to this "associative grammar", stating that the human mind keeps words and grammar stored together, in the form of lexical and grammatical compatibility (1999). We memorize not simply isolated, single words, but their relations to other words through grammatical coordination.

These linguistically inherent and simultaneously acquired associations are found in both versions, but are used more often in Greek, which can also be explained by the fact that the Greek language is more spoken than written due to its history, and the fact that Greeks are more expressive in narration. For example, the Greek word *δίσκος* "disk" comprises a part of a set expression *ο ιπτάμενος δίσκος* "flying saucer", so by providing the clue "flying" the clue-giver successfully elicits the target word "disk", the word *γλέντι* "revelry" in Greek has a constant modifier *τρικούβερτο* "high jinks", the clue for the word *παραμύθια* happens to be *του Αισώπου* which is a set expression from *Aesop's Fables*..

In the following dialogue, in order to elicit the word *μάρτυρες* "witnesses" within the topic "Court" the clue-giver decided to recall the image of court hearings and presents the address in the Greek court when a judge gives the floor to the participants in a hearing:

Clue-giver: *Πείτε μας κύριε...;*
Guesser*: Συνήγορε.*
Clue-giver*: Όχι.*
Guesser*: Κύριε δικαστά...*
Clue-giver*: Όχι*
Guesser*: Κύριε εισαγγελέα...*
Clue-giver*: Αυτός που έχει το τυχαίο σου...*

Clue-giver: Tell us Mr....
Guesser: The council for the defense.
Clue-giver: No
Guesser: Your Honor Judge...
Clue-giver: No.
Guesser: Mr. District Attorney...
Clue-giver: The one thereon hangs your fate.

Proverbs can also be provided with the target words they include omitted. For example, we find the target word *πίτα* "pie" in the proverb *και αυτή ολόκληρη και ο σκύλος χορτάτος,* literally "it (a pie) remains whole, and a dog well-fed", or "eat one's cake and have it". So here the Greek pie is elicited by means of the proverb-clue "the wolves are full and the sheep are whole". The word *χρυσός* "gold" is elicited by means of the saying *ό,τι γυαλίζει, δεν είναι ο χρυσός "*all that glitters is not gold".

It is worth mentioning here that one word can be used in various contexts, and it depends on the clue-giver which one to choose. In the following example the target word *παραβάν* "polling booth" can be used with the verb *κλείνω* "close", as we have to do this when entering inside. But the overall context allows other interpretations, and the guesser thinks of a mobile phone which should be switched off, as in Greek the verb "close" is used to denote this action. This is why the clue-giver is forced to provide more specific details, and says that the object in question has to be closed for no one to see us inside.

So the acquired association can be interpreted correctly if the clue-giver and guesser share the same knowledge from the history and culture of their country. The target expression *Mary Poppins* from the American show is more than efficiently represented with the clue *supercalifragilisticexpialidocious*, but chiefly when addressing English-speaking people of a certain age. This nonsense word was coined by the writers of one of the best known songs in cinema, and was for a long time one of the most famous long words in English. For younger speakers, and in languages other than English, however, the value of the clue will vary depending on whether the story of *Mary Poppins* is still popular and on whether the film is still shown, dubbed or subtitled. We may compare this case with a very famous Soviet film made in 1983, where the heroine is surely described, and instantly recognized, by Russian-speakers born in the 1970s, as "Samo sovershenstvo" (perfection itself, pluperfection).

We also have to mention one more grammatical means widely exploited by Greek clue-givers, which does not exist in English or Ukrainian. In Greek there is a definite/indefinite article which has different presentations for each gender: "ο" for masculine, "η" [i] for female and '"το" [to] for neuter gender. So when the player gives a clue, the word denoting the object of reality is often accompanied by its article, showing not biological but grammatical gender (as in Greek, for example, "a small girl" is of neuter gender), thus suggesting the target word. The assignment of gender in all the languages having it is voluntary, and not necessarily coincides with biological gender. The following interaction between the clue-giver and guesser did not end up with the successful eliciting of the target word *η μπάλα* "a ball" (female in Greek), probably because the reference to the article distracted the guesser. The first clue provided was a definite article for female gender, then the clue-giver added the words *βλέπω την* "I see [it] [definite female article in accusative case]". This made the guesser think of something connected with "football" (the topic of the game) being female in gender, and the response given was thus *την καρτέλα* "the card" (of female gender in Greek). The following specification was *τη στρογγυλή* "the round one", which elicited *κάμερα* "camera". The clue-giver then decided to change tactics, and presented different kinds of the target object in reality *του μπάσκετ, του ποδοσφαίρου, βλέπω* ... "foot-ball, basket-ball, I see [it]".

6.2.3 Emergent situational associations

Experiencing a word can prime its accessibility and associative connections to related words (Nelson & Goodmon 2002: 380). That is why in this show, which is a team game providing emergent situational associations, the participants typically try to offer clues connected with the appearance or occupation of their co-players, or those activating their experience of the contact with the object of reality in question. "Prior and actual situational experience is privatized / subjectivized and prioritized in the mind of interlocutors" (Kecskes 2017). As a result, there may be no single point in the recovery process at

which a clue-giver's utterance fully matches a guesser's interpretation. This is because in both clues and the guesser's interpretation the "analysis of clues is "contaminated" by individualized pragmatic elements" (Kecskes 2014: 192). This is what C. Jung calls "egocentric reactions". Such clues are not always enough, and other salient features are referred to verbally and non-verbally. For example, when the word *glasses* had to be elicited in the show from a person wearing glasses, the most secure/salient feature in that situation was *you are wearing them right now.* Or the target word *drought* within the topic "Los Angeles" in the American show was presented as *right now we have not much water* with reference to the actual weather conditions. Similarly, the color in the target expression *Red Square* was presented as *it's not black, ... I'm wearing it now* (the player was in a red shirt). The following text presents the dialogue to elicit the target word *song* within the topic "Nursery school":

Clue-giver: *Εγώ γράφω...*
Guesser: *Στο θρανίο;*
Clue-giver: *Η δουλειά που κάνω τι είναι;*
Guesser: *Στιχουργός.*

Clue-giver: I'm writing...
Guesser: On the school-desk?
Clue-giver: My job... what I am doing
Guesser: Lyrics writer.

Even if clue-givers provide surely recognizable features, characteristics that are absolutely salient, some objects and the words denoting them remain unrecognized. The most probable explanation why this happens is that the clue-givers are providing the guessers with features which are salient for them personally, because of their education, experience, interests, social environment, and so on, but the guessers actually have "different prior experiences, varying evaluations of the actual situational context, individual degrees of salience which result in a subjectivized process of production and comprehension" (Kecskes 2014: 192). In the following dialogue from the Greek show the target destination in the game "Where are you going?" is Myrtos Beach on the island Kefalonia, known for its huge waves.

Guesser: *Πού πας;*
Clue-giver*: Κεφαλονιά, θάλασσα, πολύ μεγάλα κύματα...*
Guesser: *Ωραία...*
Clue-giver*: Κεφαλονιά. Έχεις πάει Κεφαλονιά;*
Guesser: *Όχι.*
Clue-giver*: Τότε κατέβασέ με να φύγω.*

Guesser: Where are you going?
Clue-giver: Kefalonia, sea, huge waves...
Guesser: Good...
Clue-giver: Kefalonia. Have you been there?
Guesser: No.
Clue-giver: Then stop and let me get out of the car.

To prevent such failures and secure successful communication, some players provided clues they considered more relevant for a particular guesser. For example, when eliciting the word *ψαλίδι* "scissors" within the topic "Nursery school", one participant referred to the well-known children's game *πέτρα, ψαλίδι, χαρτί* "rock, scissors, paper". But within the topic "Football", where *ψαλίδι* "scissors kick" is a term, one male clue-giver presented it to the female guesser as *...κόβουμε τη κοτσίδα με αυτό* "we cut a plait with this".

7 Conclusion

TV shows like *Hollywood Game Night* are created to entertain viewers and to avoid insulting them. As it is not an intellectual game, the makers of the show choose as the target words to be elicited in well-known terms denoting objects used in everyday life, or which are otherwise widely-known. But the dialogues we find in the show also happen in everyday life rather often when we sometimes forget the name of an object we want to refer to. And just like the participants in the show in such cases we call not on dictionary definitions to get the word we want, but instead address the background knowledge we assume is common for our interlocutors.

The participants of the show thus search for the most salient characteristics of the objects in question, which are their inherent characteristics or attributes, and their functions. They may well fall back on linguistic associations which the names of the objects acquire due to compatibility with the target words. Moreover, all this is due to the fact that they rely on the commonality of the communicative situation, and evaluate the salience of this or that association according to Grice's maxims of quantity, quality, relation and manner. The clue-givers provide as much information as they judge to be enough for guessers to understand them. They provide their interlocutors with the associations that they believe to be true and familiar to the guessers, presumably because they have experienced the situations involving the objects in question personally. The clue-givers try to be clear and avoid obscurity and ambiguity.

We believe the further study of associations could provide lexicographers with a great deal of useful data. The criteria of salience that ordinary people, native speakers of a language, apply for choosing associations may help in writing definitions which will be more precise and comprehensible. In this respect, associative experiments should be held with subjects (obtained via crowdsourcing or otherwise encouraging different types of speakers to be involved) being asked to elicit definitions of target words, and not associations with real-world objects, as is usually done.

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