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HUMOR AS A COMPONENT OF LUDIC COMPETENCE

The article describes the sense of humor as one of the seven components of ludic competence according to the author's original concept of ludic competence. Relying on the previous theoretical and empirical research works that dealt with the sense of humor to a varying degree, as well as on the results of their own psycholinguistic experiment, the authors define and describe the polar forms of humor, i.e. "tediousness" and "buffoonery" (poles of deficiency and excess), and the optimal form of its development, i.e. "philosophical humor". "Real humorist" is determined as a ludic position that corresponds to "philosophical humor". "A bore" and "a buffoon" are described as the polar forms of the "real humorist" ludic position. The polar forms of "philosophical humor" and those of the "real humorist" ludic position help to achieve a comprehensive and detailed description of the sense of humor as a component of ludic competence.

Key words: ludic competence, playfulness, ludic position, psycholinguistic experiment, humor.

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ПОЧУТТЯ ГУМОРУ ЯК КОМПОНЕНТ ІГРОВОЇ КОМПЕТЕНТНОСТІ

У статті в рамках авторської концепції ігрової компетентності описаний один з семи її компонентів – почуття гумору. Спираючись на теоретичні та емпіричні дослідження вчених, предмет вивчення яких тією чи іншою мірою становило почуття гумору, а також на результати психолінгвістичного експерименту, проведеного автором, виділено й охарактеризовано полюсні форми почуття гумору – “занудство” й “блазенство” (полюсу недостатності й полюсу надмірності) та оптимальна форма його розвитку – “філософський гумор”. Відповідно “філософському гуморові» визначена ігрова позиція “справжній гуморист”. Виявлено та описано полюсні форми ігрової позиції “справжній гуморист” – “зануда” й “блазень гороховий”. Полюсні форми “філософського гумору” та ігрової позиції “справжній гуморист” дозволили отримати найбільш повне й змістовне уявлення щодо почуття гумору як компоненту ігрової компетентності.

Ключові слова: ігрова компетентність, грайливість, ігрова позиція, психолінгвістичний експеримент, почуття гумору.

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ЧУВСТВО МОРА КАК КОМПОНЕНТ ИГРОВОЙ КОМПЕТЕНТНОСТИ

В статье в рамках авторской концепции игровой компетентности описан один из семи ее компонентов – чувство юмора. Опираясь на теоретические и эмпирические исследования ученых, чей предмет изучения в той или иной степени составляло чувство юмора, а также на результаты психолингвистического эксперимента, проведенного автором, выделены и охарактеризованы полюсные формы чувства юмора – «занудство» и «шутство» (полюса недостаточности и полюса чрезмерности) и оптимальная форма его развития – «философский юмор». Соответственно «философскому юмору» определена игровая позиция «настоящий юморист». Выявлены и описаны полюсные формы игровой позиции «настоящий юморист» – «зануда» и «шут гороховый». Полюсные формы «философского юмора» и игровой позиции «настоящий юморист» позволили получить наиболее полное и содержательное представление о чувстве юмора как компоненте игровой компетентности.

Ключевые слова: игровая компетентность, игривость, игровая позиция, психолингвистический эксперимент, чувство юмора.

Introduction. Nowadays playfulness in adults is a popular subject of psychological research. If previously, according to Scott Eberle, the editor of the American Journal of Play, playfulness “didn’t seem as respectable as other things “The grave and the serious seemed more important than the way we find levity in our lives” [1], but now all the existing definitions of playfulness that we are aware of prove its connection with all other aspects of well-being (Barnett, 1991; Starbuck & Webster, 1991; Glynn & Webster, 1993; Tsuji Hit. et al, 1996; Schaefer & Greenberg, 1997; Dunn, 2004; Guitard et al., 2005; Yu P. et al, 2007; Tan, 2009; Proyer & Ruch, 2011; Weber & Ruch, 2012; Chick et al., 2012; Tan & McWilliam, 2013; Proyer & Wagner, 2015; Gordienko-Mytrofanova & Sauta, 2016; Gordienko-Mytrofanova & Kobzeva, 2017).

It must be confessed that when we initiated our research of playfulness in adults we did not have the slightest idea that playfulness as a stable personality trait has its own history since we had been working exceptionally with Russian- and Ukrainian speaking discourse. In the very beginning of our research we encountered misunderstanding of the substance of the studied subject in the academic circles in Ukraine, which was primarily related to the subject matter of the term “playfulness”, caused by literal interpretation of its perception.

However, it would be fair to notice that the conference talks have always aroused keen interest and positive emotional feedback from the audience (Gordienko-Mytrofanova & Sauta, 2014, 2015, 2016; Gordienko-Mytrofanova & Kobzeva, 2017; Gordienko-Mytrofanova & Bondar, 2017).

In the course of our research we noticed and highlighted a huge number of definitions of playfulness. At the same time we discovered that the notion of

playfulness had not been defined, which laid the basis for carrying out psycholinguistic experiment since the reality of each notion is depicted in the language [2, p. 457].

The aim of psycholinguistic experiment is to outline and describe the psycholinguistic meaning of a given word, which is localized in human psyche. The psycholinguistic meaning reflects “the reality of language consciousness, there is nothing counterfeit in it, all semantic components and meanings here are psychological reality” [3, p. 147-148].

The main stage of describing the psycholinguistic meanings of the word “playfulness” included a free-association test with this stimulus.

The main **goal** of our study is thus to reveal meanings of stimulus “playfulness” in the linguistic consciousness of Ukrainian people who can speak Russian fluently. The psycholinguistic meanings of playfulness were determined on the basis of all core and peripheral reactions produced by the representative sample selected by the criteria of “gender” and “age” (1600 pers.), and with the help of semantic interpretation method. In its turn, it enabled us to single out those components of playfulness that were reflected in the linguistic consciousness of Ukrainian people. Humor is one of these components.

The components of playfulness are also the components of ludic competence. The development of playfulness as a stable personality trait in the modern world of gamification is the basis for developing ludic competence.

Our understanding of playfulness is very close to the definition of playfulness suggested by the Canadian scientist P. Guitard, who writes in one of her works that “...*playfulness should have many benefits, including adaptability, openness to new ideas, learning, growth, and a tendency to interpret situations as challenges rather than threats*...” [4, p. 10].

Our understanding of playfulness is also close to the definition given by Swiss scientists R. Proyer and W. Ruch. Their results indicate that playfulness in adults is robustly associated with strengths of character: *playfulness in adults relates to positive psychological functioning and is robustly associated with the “good character”, strengths of character; ... playfulness also has a potential in serving as a lubricant in social situations ... and also has the contribution to well-being in adults* [5].

The concept of ludic competence of an adult person is developed within the paradigm of culture-historical approach. That means that we deal with Homo Ludens rather than an agent of activity.

To understand humor as a component of ludic competence (or of playfulness), we relied in the first place on the results of our psycholinguistic experiment, but also on some important previous findings about humor.

The Humor Styles Questionnaire (HSQ) was developed by R. Martin and P. Doris (2003), which measures individual differences in styles of humor (rela-

tively benevolent or potentially detrimental and destructive) and how these differences influence health, well-being, relationships, and other outcomes.

Humor is a phenomenon associated with pleasure as a result of predominantly intellectual activity of a person [6]. There are four styles of humor: self-enhancing, affiliative, aggressive, and self-defeating humor. These humor styles represent how an individual uses humor in daily life. A high score in self-enhancing humor means they often use humor as a coping mechanism and would be able “to maintain a humorous outlook on life even when one is not with other people, to be frequently amused by the incongruities of life, to maintain a humorous perspective even in the face of stress or adversity” [7, p. 211]. As for individuals who score high in affiliative humor, they use humor “to say funny things, to tell jokes, and to engage in spontaneous witty banter, in order to amuse others, to facilitate relationships, and to reduce interpersonal tensions” [7, p. 211]. In case of aggressive humor, these individuals are likely to use humor “for the purpose of criticizing or manipulating others, as in sarcasm, teasing, ridicule, derision, or disparagement humor, as well as the use of potentially offensive (e.g., racist or sexist) forms of humor” [7, p. 211]. Finally, people scoring high in self-defeating humor “use of excessively self-disparaging humor ... to amuse others by doing or saying funny things at one’s own expense, and laughing along with others when being ridiculed or disparaged” [7, p. 211]. Self-enhancing humor and affiliative humor are known as relatively healthy or adaptive humor styles due to their beneficial nature to psychological well-being, and aggressive and self-defeating humor are relatively unhealthy and potentially detrimental humor styles because of their destructive nature.

There are also several studies that provide empirical evidence to the positive correlation between self-enhancing humor and playfulness, whereas aggressive humor has not been found to be relevant to adult playfulness (L. Barnett, P. Guitard, R. Proyer, S. Tümkaya) [8-10].

In 2004 Ch. Peterson and M. Seligman represented the first attempt to identify and classify positive psychological traits of human beings. Their manual (Character Strengths and Virtues (CSV) handbook) identified 6 classes of virtues, underlying 24 measurable character strengths: Wisdom and Knowledge; Courage; Humanity; Justice; Temperance; Transcendence [11].

In their classification of virtues (understood as “signature strengths”), Ch. Peterson and M. Seligman treat appreciation of beauty, gratitude, hope, *humor*, and spirituality as “Strengths of Transcendence”. “The common theme running through these strengths of transcendence is that each allows individuals to forge connections to the larger universe and thereby provide meaning to their lives. Almost all the positive traits in our classification reach outside the individual – character, after all, is social in nature – but in the case of the tran-

scendence strengths, the reaching goes beyond other people per se to embrace part or all of the larger universe. <...> Humor – admittedly the most controversially placed entry – connects someone directly to troubles and contradictions in a way that produces not terror or anger but pleasure” [11, p. 519].

However, Ch. Peterson and M. Seligman do not differentiate between humor and playfulness, “Humor [playfulness]: Liking to laugh and tease; bringing smiles to other people; seeing the light side; making (not necessarily telling) jokes” [12, p. 606].

However, it was already back in 1997 that C. Schaefer and R. Greenberg (Playfulness Scale for Adults: fun-loving, sense of humor, enjoys silliness, informal, whimsical) argued that playfulness is a broader construct than humor, and found a moderate positive correlation between playfulness and the measure of sense of humor [13].

Later this assumption was confirmed by numerous theoretical works and empirical research results (Guitard, 2005; Barnett, 2007; McGhee, 2010; Proyer & Ruch, 2011; Yarnal, C., Qian X., 2011; Yue, 2011; Proyer, 2012).

When describing the peculiarities of humor as a component of ludic competence, we certainly paid attention to Aristotle’s concept of virtue as a relative mean between two extremes. Virtue is the golden middle between two extremes, one of excess and the other of deficiency. As the extremities of vices have no limits, virtue lies between the extreme manifestations of vices.

While explaining his teaching, Aristotle provides a short essay with a “table” of various moral virtues and their corresponding vices (courage, temperance, liberality, magnanimity and proper ambition, patience, sincerity, amiability, modesty, wit). He also showed how virtue finds its place between two extremes. Thus, for example, in “Nicomachean Ethics” the ancient Greek philosopher wrote that “Those then who go to excess in ridicule are thought to be *buffoons* and *vulgar fellows* ... <...>. Those on the other hand who never by any chance say anything funny themselves and take offence at those who do, are considered *boorish* and *morose*. Those who jest with good taste are called *witty* or *versatile* – that is to say, full of good turns” [14, 1128a.1].

When describing the polar forms of humor as a component of ludic competence, we certainly relied on the works of scholars who dealt with humor as subject of their research to a varying degree: Henri-Louis Bergson, a French philosopher, (Laughter: An Essay on the Meaning of the Comic, 1900), Sigmund Freud, an Austrian psychoanalyst, (Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious, 1905), Sergei Rubinstein, a Soviet psychologist, (Man and World, 1973), Carroll Ellis Izard, an American research psychologist, (The Psychology of Emotions, 1991), American psychologists, the representatives of personality approach to humor), – Gordon Willard Allport (Pattern and Growth

in Personality, 1961) and Abraham Harold Maslow (Motivation and personality, 1954).

The **aim** of the present paper is to give a comprehensive and substantial description of the sense of humor as a component of ludic competence by means of defining its ludic position, as well as describing its polar forms and the optimal mode of developing sense of humor and ludic position. The polar forms of the sense of humor have already been subject of one of our previous articles, where it was considered as therapeutic humor [15]. In the present article, however, we would like to focus our attention on the sense of humor as a component of ludic competence.

Results and discussion. An extensive introduction is necessary before we can start describing the sense of humor as a component of ludic competence. So, we investigate *ludic competence* and *playfulness* per se from the psycholinguistic approach. The psycholinguistic experiment was implemented according to the algorithm developed by Sternin, I., the author of the concept of psycholinguistic meaning [3, p. 128-129]. The main stage of the psycholinguistic experiment was carrying out of a free associative test in written (for a testee) form with “playfulness” as a stimulus word. According to the instruction the respondents were supposed to determine their gender, age, education/specialization, occupation/position, marital status and write first five words that came to their minds and somehow associated to the “playfulness”.

It is worth noting that several samples are considered in this research, since playfulness is studied by a team of scholars headed by the author of this paper, Doctor of Science in Psychology, a professor of Practical Psychology Department at Kharkov National Pedagogical University by G.S. Skovoroda. The biggest sample in this research comprises 4,795 respondents equally representing all major age groups: juvenility (17-21), youth (22-30), maturity (31-59), old age (60-75), males and females being equally represented. So far this has been the biggest free association test ever conducted.

The results of the free association test were used to build an association field of “playfulness” as a stimulus word (results for the first response), where all the reactions are arranged in the decreasing order of their frequency.

The analysis of the reactions convincingly proved that in terms of its functioning, “playfulness” is a relevant lexeme in the linguistic consciousness of Ukrainian people who can speak Russian fluently.

The analysis of the associations also revealed common and specific features in the verbal behavior of different groups of respondents divided by the criteria of “gender” and “age”.

Common features in the verbal behavior of the respondents of all age groups reflected in the following lexemes (the most frequent reactions): “coquetry”, “merry-making”, “flirting”, “joy”, “children”, “cheerfulness”,

“mood”, “champagne”, “impishness”, “ease”, “joke”, “hazard”, etc. The common also for all age groups is the positive estimational and emotional characteristic of the stimulus [16].

Gender and age differences in the verbal behavior of respondents were reflected only in the sequence of reactions. The content and nature of associations have not changed [17].

The further step of the research was aimed at revealing specific features in the verbal behavior of respondents representing different “profession types”: “person-nature”, “person-person”, “person-sign systems”, “person-technology”, “person-artistic image”, according to Ye. Klimov [18]. For this purpose we used a sample consisting of 500 people (18-35), with 100 people for each “profession type”, males and females being equally represented. Professional differences in the verbal behavior of respondents are only detected at the extreme periphery of the associative field “playfulness” [19].

Since the influence of age-, gender-, and profession-specific differences in the verbal behavior of respondents is only detected at the extreme periphery, the psycholinguistic meanings of “playfulness” were described (using the method of semantic interpretation of the results of the psycholinguistic experiment on the linguistic material of the sample, with fewer respondents.

To this end, we used a sample of 1,600 respondents which comprises 800 people in each age group (“youth” – 22-30, “maturity” – 31-59), males and females being equally represented [20].

The semantic interpretation of the results of the free association test made it possible to single out 19 psycholinguistic meanings, 3 out of them being false meanings. They refer to 1) ***“cheerful and joyful state”***, 2) ***“intention to attract the attention of the opposite or one’s own sex”***, 3) ***“child-like spontaneity”***, 4) ***“agility, physical activity of an animal”***, 5) ***“daring and provocative behavior”***, 6) ***“agility, physical behavior of a human being”***, 7) ***“ease”***, 8) ***“changeability”***, 9) ***“behavior during a sexual intercourse”***, 10) ***“carelessness”***, 11) ***“mental activity”***, 12) ***“deliberate deceit”***, 13) ***“uniqueness”***, 14) ***“an adult emulating child’s behavior”***, 15) ***“pointless tinkering with an object”***, 16) ***“airiness”***. There are false meanings: “game”, “to play games”, “gambling addiction”.

The formulated psycholinguistic meanings of playfulness can be fully considered as those, which represent the most appropriate and reliable model of the system meaning of the word studied which reflect the reality of linguistic consciousness. In particular, the research held has convincible proven that only psycholinguistic meaning allows to elicit the actual meanings and semantic components of the word studied (“playfulness”), which differ from its lexicographic correlate [21-22] and communicative meaning, and also descriptively useful scientific meanings of “playfulness” as the word with unclear semantic.

The analysis of various scales of playfulness that are given in a number of available questionnaires for measuring playfulness in adults yielded 18 components-scales of playfulness: Adult Playfulness Scale (APS) [spontaneous, expressive, fun, creative, silly]: Glynn M.A., Webster J., 1992; Five-factor personality questionnaire (FFPQ) [curiosity, fantasy, sentiment, sensitivity to internal experience, fugue]: Tsuji Hei. 1996; Playfulness Scale for Adults [fun-loving, sense of humor, enjoys silliness, informal, whimsical]: Schaefer C., Greenberg R., 1997; Playfulness Scale [gregarious, uninhibited, comedic, dynamic]: Barnett L., 2007; Older Adult Playfulness Scale [upbeat, impish, spontaneous, humorous]: Yarnal, C., Qian X., Short Measure for Adult Playfulness (SMAP) [observation by self and others, frequency, easy onset, and absorption of playfulness]: Proyer, R. T., Ruch, W. & Müller, 2012; OLIW questionnaire [Other-directed, Lighthearted, Intellectual, and Whimsical playfulness]: Proyer, R. T., 2017.

Here it is worth paying attention to the fact that the psycholinguistic meanings that we described and defined with the help of psycholinguistic tools on the basis of Ukrainian sample alone included 18 components-scales of playfulness, which have been elicited by scholars from various countries with the help of various methods. Back then we did not pay much attention to this fact. However, when we were presenting the results of our research at the 11th International Congress of ISAPL (International Society of Applied Psycholinguistics) in 2016, this fact attracted the attention of Japanese scholars [23]. In the debate that followed we and our foreign colleagues concluded that there was no need to carry out the experiment on other samples with other languages.

The analysis of the outlined components-scales of playfulness, high-frequency reactions of the biggest sample of 4,795 respondents, and the established psycholinguistic meanings made it possible to single out the following components of playfulness: “*sensitivity*”, “*imagination*”, “*sense of humor*”, “*ease*”, “*flirting*” (as an intention to attract the attention of the opposite or one’s own sex), “*mischievousness*” (as a particular example of self-challenge), “*fugue*” (as provocative and/or eccentric behavior).

This is the history behind our research into the sense of humor as the component of ludic competence. Out of all the components of ludic competence that are listed above, “*sensitivity*” alone was not reflected among high-frequency reactions and psycholinguistics meanings that were described. However, this issue goes beyond the framework of the present article.

The components of playfulness as an integral personality trait are also the components of ludic competence. These are defined as “self-motivated qualities” (i.e. all cognitive, affective, and conative components of the motivated behaviour) [23, p. 5] that help individuals to achieve personally meaningful

goals. In our case, the goal is to develop individual identity to the extent which ensures successful socialization, i.e. successful psychological functioning.

The components of playfulness lie in the basis of ludic positions. ***Ludic position*** we define as an effective way of creative adaptation to the reality of one's "Self" and to the reality of the "Other". They are: sensitiveness (sensitive) – "*esthete*"; imagination – "*sculptor*"; *ease* – "*balance-master*"; flirting (flirtatious) – "*diplomat*"; mischievousness (mischievous) – "*frolicsome fellow*"; humor (funny) – "*real humorist*"; fugue – "*wacky*".

Ludic positions are manifestations of ludic competence in various standard and nonstandard situations, i.e. the behavioural aspect. Thus, mastering ludic positions means mastering specific behavioural patterns.

Now, taking into account the above mentioned components of playfulness and ludic positions, we would like to present one more descriptive definition of playfulness. As a stable personality trait, playfulness, thanks to *imagination*, enables us to see the world as a whole and the current situation in particular in the most comprehensive way, i.e. from within one's Self as seen by the Other (*sensitively*), and solve it with a *sense of humor*, *ease* and child-like spontaneity or, on the contrary, in a sophisticated and exquisite manner of an adult person (*flirting*), frequently in various forms of *self-challenging*, and sometimes in a bold and decisive fashion, walking "on the edge" of Self-identity and socialization (*in fugue*).

Now we have every ground to explore the peculiarities of the sense of humor as the component of ludic competence within the description of its polar forms.

Focusing on the polar forms of the sense of humor and the ludic competence "a real humorist" seems most practical, because, the deficiency of the sense of humor, as well as its redundancy, much in the same way as other qualities, as it was noted by N. Peseschkian, "frequently result in conflicts in the emotional sphere or in the behavior, and sometimes cause psychosomatic disorders" [25, p. 53]. This is understood because these qualities ("actual capacities" as described by N. Peseschkian) are variable values of socialization.

The basic assumptions of our concept, i.e. the polar forms of the sense of humor, as the component of ludic competence, are based on the theoretical and empirical research of the scholars listed below.

The analysis of theoretical aspects of humor, the empirical data obtained by the above mentioned authors, and our own research into the sense of humor as a component of ludic competence from the psycholinguistic approach, enabled us to make a conclusion that the utmost form of the sense of humor is "*philosophical humor*", according to A. Maslow [26], which corresponds to "the golden mean" of an educated person speaking in terms of Aristotle [14].

“Philosophical humor” elicits a smile more usually than a laugh, which is intrinsic to the situation rather than added to it, which is spontaneous rather than planned, and which very often can never be repeated; it often seemed to be education in a more palatable form, akin to parables or fables [26, p. 222-223].

In this respect, the styles of humor that correspond to philosophical humor, according to R. Martin, are *affiliative* and *self-enhancing*.

The polar forms of **“philosophical humor”** are **“buffoonery”** which is the excess and **“tediousness”** which is the deficiency of sense of humor.

TEDIOUSNESS ← PHILOSOPHICAL HUMOR → BUFFOONERY

Buffoonery reveals itself as fooling around, clownishness, frivolous and flippant behaviour.

Tediousness reveals itself as being a nuisance, boring, moralising, meaningless, too self-confident, meticulous, and prone to lengthy and exhausting reasoning, aggressive assertion, negative attitude to things and people, biased opinion.

It is worth mentioning that according to Aristotle, the golden mean is being witty and charming, whereas the excess is buffoonery and deficiency is tediousness [14, 1128a.1 -128b.1].

The styles of humor that correspond to buffoonery and tediousness are *aggressive* and *self-defeating*.

Philosophical humor corresponds to ludic position **“Real Humorist”** as defined by G. Allport.

The ludic position **“Real Humorist”** is described according to G. Allport, A. Maslow, and Aristotle. G. Allport believes that “perhaps the most striking correlate of insight is the sense of humor” [27, p. 88]. He also explains that “the reason why insight and humor march hand in hand is probably because at bottom they are a single phenomenon – the phenomenon of self-objectification” [28, p. 293]. G. Allport believes that being able to laugh at oneself is a quality of a mature individual, and he also thinks that a real humorist perceives himself behind some solemn event, for instance – the contrast between pretension and performance: “The man who has the most complete sense of proportion concerning his own qualities and cherished values is able to perceive their incongruities and absurdities in certain settings” [27, p. 292-93]. “The Real Humorist” does not let their real merits and achievements be exaggerated. This kind of egoism is restrained by self-awareness and humor [27, p. 290-342].

A. Maslow believes that humor is a quality of self-actualized personalities. As he was observing self-actualized personalities, A. Maslow noticed that they all have a peculiar sense of humor. “They do not laugh at hostile humor (making people laugh by hurting someone) or superiority humor (laughing at someone else’s inferiority) or authority-rebellion humor (the unfunny, smutty joke).

Characteristically what they consider humor is more closely allied to philosophy than to anything else. It may also be called the humor of the real because it consists in large part in poking fun at human beings in general when they are foolish, or forget their place in the universe, or try to be big when they are actually small” [26, p. 222-223]. Punning, joking, witty remarks, joyful repartees, persiflage of the ordinary sort are much less typical of them. Besides, their humor is likely to be spontaneous rather than planned, and that very often can never be repeated [26, p. 223].

Aristotle calls a person witty if he abides by the golden mean in terms of entertainment. The Greek philosopher believed that this kind of person is amiable and pleasant to deal with. *“The middle state belongs also to tact; it is the mark of a tactful man to say and listen to such things as befit a good and well-bred man”* [28, 1128b.1]

A bore is a nerdy and annoying person who is too self-assured and meticulous. It is a person who is prone to lengthy and unnecessarily detailed reasoning, didacticism, idle talking, aggressive defense of their ideas, negative attitude to events/situation/surrounding people, and stereotyped thinking.

Aristotle believes that “who never by any chance say anything funny themselves and take offence at those who do, are considered boorish and morose. <...> The boor is of no use in playful conversation: he contributes nothing and takes offence at everything; yet relaxation and amusement seem to be a necessary element in life” [14, 1128a.20-1128b.1].

A buffoon is a person who pokes fun and fools around to make others laugh. The Russian language has idioms with this word that have negative connotation. “Playing the buffoon” is a common way of describing someone who intentionally makes a laughing-stock of themselves [14, p. 811].

Aristotle describes a buffoon as a person who “knows no measure in laughter”, i. e. “goes to excess in ridicule; cannot resist a joke; itches to have his joke at all costs, and is more concerned to raise a laugh than to keep within the bounds of decorum and avoid giving pain to the object of their raillery; will not keep his tongue off himself or anyone else, if he can raise a laugh” [14, 1128a.1 -128b.1].

Thus, let us draw a conclusion. The polar forms of the ludic position **“Real Humorist”** are **“Bore”** as deficiency and **“Buffoon”** as excess.

BORE ← REAL HUMORIST → BUFFOON

According to Aristotle **BOOR ← WIT → BUFFOON**.

Conclusions. Summarizing the results of the presented research, we would like to focus attention on the following basic aspects of the ludic competence concept, which we developed, and in particular on humor as a component of ludic competence.

1. The concept of *ludic competence* of an adult person has been developed within the paradigm of culture-historical approach.

2. The latter means that we deal with *Homo Ludens* rather than an agent of activity. *Homo Ludens* possesses *ludic competence*.

3. Ludic competence is formed alongside with the development of *playfulness*, which is a stable personality trait in the modern world of gamification.

4. Playfulness has been explored with the help of *psycholinguistic experiment*, whose major stage was a free association test with “playfulness” as a stimulus word. The biggest sample in our research comprises 4,795 respondents equally representing all major age groups: juvenility (17-21), youth (22-30), maturity (31-59), old age (60-75), males and females being equally represented.

This enabled us, first of all, to reveal the influence of age-, gender-, and profession-specific differences in the verbal behavior of respondents. Secondly, on the basis of the psycholinguistic experiment an assumption has been made that psycholinguistic meanings of the word “playfulness” differ dramatically from its scientific meanings in psychology in terms of content as well as in terms of separate senses intensity.

5. The method of semantic interpretation of the results of the free association test (on the linguistic material of the sample with fewer respondents, 1600 pers.) made it possible to single out **16 psycholinguistic meanings**.

6. The analysis of various scales of playfulness that are given in a number of available questionnaires and the established psycholinguistic meanings made it possible to single out the following components of playfulness: *sensitivity, imagination, humor, ease, flirting, mischievousness, fugue*.

7. These components lie at the basis of *ludic positions* as an effective way of creative adaptation to the reality of one’s “Self” and to the reality of the “Other”: “*sensitiveness*” – “*Esthete*”; “*imagination*” – “*Sculptor*”; “*ease*” – “*Balance-master*”; “*flirting*” – “*Diplomat*”; “*mischievousness*” – “*Frolicsome Fellow*”; “*humor*” – “*Real Humorist*”; “*fugue*” – “*Wacky*”. Ludic positions are manifestations of ludic competence in various standard and nonstandard situations, i.e. the behavioral aspect.

8. The outlined components of playfulness and ludic positions enabled us to suggest a *psycholinguistic definition of playfulness*, that are reflected in the reality of language consciousness of Ukrainian people. Playfulness, thanks to *imagination*, enables us to see the world as a whole and the current situation in particular in the most comprehensive way, i.e. from within one’s Self as seen by the Other (*sensitively*), and solve it with *humor, ease* and child-like spontaneity or, on the contrary, in a sophisticated and exquisite manner of an adult person (*flirting*), frequently in various forms of *self-challenging*, and sometimes in a bold

and decisive fashion, walking “on the edge” of Self-identity and socialization (*in fugue*).

9. The components of playfulness are defined as “self-motivated qualities” and have their **polar forms**, excess and deficiency. Each ludic position also has its polar forms, excess and deficiency.

10. The utmost form of the sense of humor is “**philosophical humor**”. “**Buffoonery**” is the excess of the sense of humor, whereas “**tediousness**” is its deficiency.

11. Philosophical humor corresponds to ludic position “**Real Humorist**”. The polar forms of the ludic position “Real Humorist” are “**Bore**” as deficiency and “**Buffoon**” as excess.

The obtained results will be used to describe the behavioural pattern of the ludic position “Real Humorist” and to develop the methodology of diagnosing the sense of humor as a component of ludic competence.

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