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DOI <https://doi.org/10.24919/2308-4863.1/19.167596>**Olena GRYSHCENKO,***orcid.org/0000-0001-7678-9851**PhD (Philology), Associate Professor of English Philology and Translation Department, Borys Grinchenko Kyiv University (Kyiv, Ukraine) o.hryshchenko@kubg.edu.ua***MODERN PERCEPTION OF FAKE**

*The article deals with the notion of “fake” in terms of its perception by modern students. The findings of the association test are presented and analyzed. The results of this research provide insight into the nature of fake and its perception taking into account language and cultural peculiarities.*

*Fake is a kind of lying. It is widely spread with the help of mass media, which definitely take an active part in construction of modern reality.*

*Association test (experiment) is considered to be one of the most important methods in studying concepts and separate lexemes. Word-association techniques are used in psychology and linguistics in order to study mental processes and cognitive connections, which govern the way people use language, perceive the world, comprehend information, reason and communicate.*

*The reactions are the constituents of the inner and unconscious mind which impacts on our thoughts, feelings and linguistic behaviour. Fake is a kind of lying. Most frequent responses prove it as it is regarded as untruth, lie, deception, forgery and counterfeit. It is generally perceived as lies and correspondingly attitude to it is negative. Respondents name fake to be deceitful, deceptive, counterfeited, unreal, untruthful, false, misleading, fabricated and fictitious. There are a lot of emotionally coloured words among its characteristics – phoney, cheap, insidious, insincere, cowardly, treacherous, cunning, unscrupulous, sordid, miserable, mercenary, impudent, mean, cynical, aggressive, dummy, shameful, irresponsible, dishonourable etc. Feelings and emotions connected with fake are adverse as it causes shame, evil, fear, treachery, aggression, disgrace, rage, irritation, despair, offence, suspicion, uncertainty, misunderstanding and confusion. It is compared to theft, gamble, decay, trap, zombieing, farce, lucre, mockery, swindle and slender.*

*However emotionally neutral characteristics and other responses show that fake has become an essential part of life, a common phenomenon, which modifies communication and impacts on the linguistic consciousness, linguistic behavior and the whole sphere of concepts. Lie and deception become an ordinary thing.*

*Modern Ukrainian students suppose that it is a common phenomenon of our modern life, which has mostly negative characteristics. Emotionally coloured words manifest the way they perceive “fake”. It causes negative feelings, emotions and compared to negative actions. “Fake” is more related to emotions, feelings and attitudes and less to things, events and people.*

*The aforementioned differences between the data received and the associations in online dictionaries may manifest linguistic and cultural peculiarities. The association test gave the opportunity to elicit uncontrolled reactions, which contribute significantly to the study of fake and its perception.*

**Key words:** fake, fake reality, association test, lie, mass media.

**Олена ГРИЩЕНКО,***orcid.org/0000-0001-7678-9851**кандидат філологічних наук,**доцент кафедри англійської філології та перекладу**Київського університету імені Бориса Грінченка**(Kyiv, Ukraine) o.hryshchenko@kubg.edu.ua***СУЧАСНЕ СПРИЙНЯТТЯ ФЕЙКУ**

*У статті розглядається «фейк» з точки зору сприйняття сучасними студентами. Представлені та проаналізовані результати асоціативного експерименту. Найбільш частотні асоціації підтверджують, що фейк є різновидом брехні. Ставлення до нього в цілому негативне. Більшість респондентів вважає фейк звичайним явищем сучасного життя та асоціює зі сферою мас-медіа.*

*За результатами тесту фейк сприймається як брехня. Концепт брехні пов'язаний з ключовими культурними концептами. Отримані реакції в результаті експерименту мають велику кількість емоційно забарвлених слів, які передають емоції, почуття та ставлення.*

*Вказані відмінності мають певні культурні та лінгвістичні особливості. Асоціативний експеримент дав змогу виявити неконтрольовані реакції, які значно доповнюють вивчення та розуміння фейку та є складником внутрішньої неусвідомленої свідомості.*

**Ключові слова:** фейк, фейкова реальність, асоціативний тест, брехня, мас-медіа.

*Illusion is no longer possible, because  
the real is no longer possible.*

J. Baudrillard

**Introduction.** The word “fake” dates back to the end of the XVIII century, but the present meaning made it one of the most common and popular words of our century. The study of numerous new word combinations with “fake” and neologisms that have recently appeared in the media (Gryshchenko, 2017: 133), shows that fake has become an integral part of life in our modern world and continues to extend its influence. It is mainly associated with news (fake news) and is widely spread with the help of mass media, which definitely take an active part in construction of modern reality.

In 1981 Jean Baudrillard claimed, that in the future people would not “be able to separate reality from its statistical, simulative projection in the media, a state of suspense and of definite uncertainty about reality” as “the media are the vehicle for the simulation” (Baudrillard, 1988: 201, 218). This future has come. According to Niklas Luhmann, the reality of mass media is “the reality of second-order observation. It replaces knowledge prescriptions, which have been provided in other social formations by excellent positions of observation: by sages, priests, the nobility, the city, by religion or by politically or ethically ways of life” (Luhmann, 2000: 85). Nowadays reality presented by mass media is not just based on second-order observations. More and more often it constructs the reality with the help of non-existent “observations”, not real facts, events and personalities thus involving us into untruthful or fake reality. Such reality in the media is often referred to as “comfortable” reality.

**Theoretical Background.** D. Bolinger considered lie to be “a proper object of study for linguists” (“Truth is a linguistic Question”, 1973) (Bolinger, 1973: 539). Later H. Weinrich in his work “Linguistics of Lying” emphasized, that lying was “of concern to linguistics” (Weinrich, 2006: 9). J. Baudrillard introduced the notions of “simulacra” and “simulations”, “second-hand truth”; distinguished “real”, “neo-real”, “hyperreal” and “imaginary” (Baudrillard, 1988: 166–184).

Fake is a kind of lying. The language of liars and deceivers differs from the language of truth-tellers (Swol et al., 2012; Newman et al., 2003). Because of a higher cognitive load liars’ speech manifests markers of deception, which are hard to control (Arciuli et al., 2010). The discourse of invention (deception, lie) has specific linguistic characteristics, which are revealed due to uncontrollable psychological processes of speakers (Dilmon, 2009).

Nowadays a lot is said and written about fake, numerous articles give tips on how to spot fake, scholars teach students to detect fake and try to raise their awareness. Universities launch programs and online courses to teach young people to distinguish truth from fiction and tackle fake. However, a little is known about the processes of fake discourse production and its comprehension.

**Methods.** The following methods were used to conduct this research: method of scientific literature study (for critical analysis of theoretical works on the subject studied); descriptive method (to describe linguistic units); method of association test (to elicit uncontrolled associations to the stimulus “fake”), etc.

The **purpose** of this article is to characterize peculiarities of the perception of “fake” by modern students based on the results of the association test.

**Results and Discussion.** Association test (experiment) is considered to be one of the most important methods in studying concepts and separate lexemes. It provides valuable insight into linguistic view (picture) of the world and linguistic consciousness in general. The construction of the association field and the research of associative connections of the key lexemes deepens our understanding of the nature of fake and proves its topicality. Word-association techniques are used in psychology and linguistics in order to study mental processes and cognitive connections, which govern the way people use language, perceive the world, comprehend information, reason and communicate.

The participants of our test were Ukrainian university students (aged 17–23) whose major is the English language. 100 students took part in it. In our association test the stimulus “fake” was presented and the participants were asked to respond with the first word or idea that came to mind (stimulus – reaction). The stimulus “fake” allowed to elicit different reactions – from emotionally neutral to specific and personalized (individual). These reactions are the elements of the inner and unconscious mind, which impacts on our thoughts, feelings and linguistic behaviour.

The test contained five questions/tasks. The first – to name associations, which respondents have when they hear the word “fake”. The second – to characterize fake (using adjectives). The third – to name what helps them to detect fake. Tasks four and five included “controlled associations” and presented possible answers to select – about spheres of life “fake” is mostly related to (interpersonal relationship, politics, TV, mass media, Internet, show business) and about their attitude to “fake” as a notion in general (very much negative, positive or a common phenomenon of our modern life).

The stimulus “fake” produced the following reactions: **неправда** – untruth, lie (77); **підробка** – forgery, counterfeit (70); **обман, омана** – deception (43); **брехня** – lies (53); **вигадка** – fib, invention; **копія** – copy, counterfeit (20); **сторінка (в мережі)** – web-page (13); **Інтернет** – Internet (11); **інформація** – information (10); **політика** – politics; **підозра** – suspicion (8); **новини** – news; **людина** – man, person (7); **мас-медіа** – mass media; **ілюзія** – illusion (6); **шахрайство** – swindle, cheat; **телебачення** – TV; **плагіат** – plagiarism; **фікція** – fabrication (5); **пропаганда** – propaganda; **таємниця, загадка** – secret, mystery; **інформаційна війна** – information warfare; **крадіжка** – theft; **підлість** – meanness; **провокація** – provocation (4); **помилка** – mistake, fault; **імітація** – imitation; **провал, невдача** – failure; **недовіра** – distrust; **фотографія** – photo (3); **анонімність** – anonymity; **зло** – evil; **афера** – gamble; **страх** – fear; **бруд** – dirt, mud; **брак** – defect; **Китай** – China; **емоції** – emotions; **деградація** – decay; **зрада** – treachery, betrayal; **хитрість** – cunning; **одяг** – clothes; **пастка** – trap; **слабкість** – weakness; **сором** – shame; **імідж** – image; **спотворення, викривлення** – distortion; **обмеження** – restriction, limitation (2); **агресія** – aggression; **аналог** – analogue; **аксесуари** – accessories; **бутафорія** – windowdressing; **гроші** – money; **ганьба** – shame, disgrace; **версія** – version; **вагання** – hesitation; **жарт** – joke; **друг** – friend; **дружба** – friendship; **двійник** – twin, counterpart; **зовнішність** – appearance, surface; **зомбування** – zombieing; **заміна** – substitution; **косметика** – cosmetics; **парфуми** – perfumes; **малюнок, зображення** – picture; **клон** – clone; **комплекси** – complexes, hang-ups; **лють** – rage; **маска** – mask; **модель** – pattern, model; **цинізм** – cynicism; **телефон** – telephon; **сенсація** – sensation; **тінь** – shadow; **фальсифікація** – falsification, fraud; **фарс** – farce; **спам** – spat; **роздратованість** – irritation, annoyance; **розпач** – despair; **образа** – insult, offence; **непорозуміння** – misunderstanding; **порушення** – violation; **протиріччя** – contradiction; **перебільшення** – exaggeration, overstatement; **піар** – spin; **плутанина** – confusion; **недосконалість** – imperfection; **невідповідність** – discrepancy, incongruity; **нажива** – lucre; **насмішка, глузування** – mockery, jeer; **наклеп** – slander; **невпевненість** – uncertainty (1).

Fake is called **брехливий** – deceitful (84); **підробний** – counterfeited, fabricated (70); **несправжній** – unreal (61); **неправдивий** – untruthful (50); **фальшивий** – false (39); **оманливий** – deceptive, misleading (27); **вигаданий** – fabricated (20); **низькоякісний** – low-quality

(16); **політичний** – political (14); **недостовірний, ненадійний** – unreliable (12); **фіктивний** – fictitious (10); **штучний** – artificial; **поганий** – bad (9); **скопійований** – copied; **липовий** – phoney; **підозрілий** – suspicious (8); **неіснуючий** – non-existent; **медійний** – media; **негативний** – negative; **прихований** – implicit, hidden; **дешевий** – cheap (7); **нереальний** – unreal (6); **підступний** – insidious; **неправильний** – wrong; **нецирний** – insincere; **заплутаний** – intricate, complicated (5); **нечесний** – dishonest; **сумнівний** – doubtful; **негарний, неприємний** – unpleasant (4); **хибний** – erroneous; **непотрібний** – unnecessary; **провокаційний** – provocative; **ненатуральний, неприродний** – unnatural (3); **боягузливий** – cowardly; **бракований** – faulty, defective; **замаскований** – disguised; **злий** – wicked, evil; **обмежений** – limited; **підлий** – mean; **малосвідомий** – unaware; **зрадницький** – treacherous; **хитрий** – cunning; **безсовісний** – unscrupulous; **брудний** – sordid; **слабкий** – weak; **стидкий, ганебний** – shameful (2); **банальний** – banal; **відштовхуючий** – disgusting, repulsive; **вульгарний** – vulgar; **дивний** – strange; **жалюгідний** – miserable; **закритий, прихований** – secret, hidden; **мінливий** – changeable; **ілюзорний** – illusive; **інший** – different; **корисливий** – selfish, mercenary; **легковажний** – light-minded; **проблемний** – problematic; **піратський** – piratical; **публічний** – public; **небезпечний** – dangerous; **непідтверджений** – unconfirmed; **провальний** – stillborn; **пустий** – worthless, vain; **нелегальний** – illegal; **зухвалий** – impudent; **нерозумний** – injudicious; **удаваний** – histrionic; **особливий** – specific; **некоректний** – tactless; **несерйозний** – frivolous; **нецікавий** – uninteresting; **невпевнений** – uncertain; **впливовий** – influential, powerful; **зроблений, створений** – made, prepared; **змінений** – modified, changed; **меркантильний** – mercenary, materialistic; **шкідливий** – harmful; **цинічний** – cynical; **абсурдний** – absurd; **альтернативний** – alternative; **агресивний** – aggressive; **таємний** – secret, stealthy; **схожий** – similar; **алік**; **особливий** – specific; **показний** – ostentatious; **підставний** – dummy; **пустий, порожній** – empty; **поширений** – widespread; **низький, негідний** – dishonourable; **невпевнений** – uncertain, insecure; **неясний** – vague, ambiguous; **нетворчий** – uncreative; **безвідповідальний** – irresponsible; **нелогічний** – illogical (1).

It is also called **яскравий** – bright, **відомий** – famous, **сучасний** – modern, **популярний** – popular, **привабливий** – appealing, **публічний** – public and **загадковий** – mysterious. The following reactions are positive characteristics of fake.

Fake is a kind of lying. Most frequent responses prove it as it is regarded as untruth, lie, deception, forgery and counterfeit. It is generally perceived as lies and correspondingly

attitude to it is negative. Respondents name fake to be *deceitful, deceptive, counterfeited, unreal, untruthful, false, misleading, fabricated* and *fictitious*. There are a lot of emotionally coloured words among its characteristics – *phoney, cheap, insidious, insincere, cowardly, treacherous, cunning, unscrupulous, sordid, miserable, mercenary, impudent, mean, cynical, aggressive, dummy, shameful, irresponsible, dishonourable* etc. Feelings and emotions connected with fake are adverse as it causes *shame, evil, fear, treachery, aggression, disgrace, rage, irritation, despair, offence, suspicion, uncertainty, misunderstanding* and *confusion*. It is compared to *theft, gamble, decay, trap, zombieing, farce, lucre, mockery, swindle* and *slender*.

However emotionally neutral characteristics (*copied, wrong, unnatural, strange, different, specific, modified, alternative, widespread, vague, uncreative*) and other responses show, that fake has become an essential part of life, a common phenomenon, which modifies communication and impacts on the linguistic consciousness, linguistic behavior and the whole sphere of concepts. Lie and deception become an ordinary thing. This in turn may well cause a dramatic and profound shift from “truth” to “lies”, from “good” to “evil”.

According to the test “fake” is mostly associated with the following spheres of life: Internet (only) – 67%, mass media in general – 54%, TV in particular – 31%, show business – 28%, politics – 20%, 11% – interpersonal relationship. The data received demonstrate that fake is mostly related to the mass media, in particular TV and Internet as it is represented and spread through them.

The respondents’ attitude towards fake was unexpected. 59% considered it to be a common phenomenon of our modern life, 40% – very much negative. Only 1% called it a positive phenomenon. Although fake is named “a common phenomenon of modern life” it has mostly negative meanings. Modern young people believe, that fake “has no life”, “attracts attention”, “indulges in wishful thinking”, “deceives, misleads, disorients” and “fools” and “conceals something”. It is “the illusion of the truth”, which is “not able to be truthful”. It is “illogical” and “does not correspond to generally accepted rules and norms”. It is made by “someone, who is insecure, who has no friends, hobbies and who is cowardly” and “has a lot of hang-ups”.

The respondents named factors, which help them to detect fake. They are *life experience; the layout and the way information is presented; intuition; knowledge; bad quality/bad performance of the information; critical thinking; data and facts; details; common sense; background knowledge; suspicious*

*details; incomplete information; attention, carefulness; photos and pictures; specific features; absurd information; exaggeration and mistakes*. The participants say that they *compare and contrast facts, check information, study official or reliable sources, analyze information, reason logically* and *pay attention to small details*.

The word “fake” is registered in on-line dictionaries – an ideographic dictionary (thesaurus) Word Associations Network and a modern visual dictionary Visuwords, which are the dictionaries of associations. In Visuwords online graphical dictionary “fake” is presented in connection with the following elements: *faint, juke, fake, fakery, fake book, imposter, pretender, fakir, sham* and *postiche*. It is a kind of *feint* and *imitation*. It is related to *football* and *football game*. To “fake” means *to talk through one’s hat; forge, counterfeit; fudge, manipulate; feign, sham, pretend*. Fake is called *false, faux, bogus, phony, assumed* and *fictitious* (Visuwords).

In Word Association Networks “fake” possesses the following associations: *phenomenon, reality, celebrity, personality, identity, hoax, fraud, forgery, liar, illusion, rumour, fairy* and *placebo*. It is connected with thing, events and people: *boyfriend, police, email, certificate, jewellery, check, suicide, pregnancy, robbery, kidnapping, illness, wedding, sickness, attack, funeral*. “Fake” has such characteristics as *composite, ridiculous, genuine, revealing, false, convincing, fictitious, misleading, mocking, simulated, malicious, illegal, imitated, anonymous, obvious, fictional* and *facial*. At the same time it is considered to be *real, clever, alive, realistic* and *humorous*.

The comparison of our findings and entries of online dictionaries makes it possible to see the differences in the way people understand “fake”. According to the findings of the association test “fake” is regarded as “lie”. The concept of “lie” here is closely connected to basic cultural concepts – *truth, trust, honesty, friendship, dignity, good* and *evil*. In online dictionaries it is mainly seen as “an illegal copy of something that is made to trick people”. The word “fake” is mainly related to things, events and people (*jewellery, wedding, boyfriend*). It is not characterized with the help of emotionally coloured or loaded words. Whereas responses elicited in the association test contain a lot of emotionally charged words, which are related to feelings, emotions and attitudes. Among common reactions are *illusion, misleading* and *illegal*. Among different – *football* and *football game*, which were not elicited in the test.

**Conclusions.** Fake is a modern notion, which influences different spheres of life. It affects people’s behaviour and language. It has changed the way they

communicate, produce, process and comprehend information. Its basic components are *lie* and *deception*. It is a kind of lie, which is spread through mass media.

Modern Ukrainian students suppose that it is a common phenomenon of our modern life, which has mostly negative characteristics. Emotionally coloured words manifest the way they perceive “fake”. It causes negative feelings, emotions and compared to

negative actions. “Fake” is more related to emotions, feelings and attitudes and less to things, events and people.

The aforementioned differences between the data received and the associations in online dictionaries may manifest linguistic and cultural peculiarities. The association test gave the opportunity to elicit uncontrolled reactions, which contribute significantly to the study of fake and its perception.

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