

**VODKA AND BEER IN THE CONTEMPORARY RUSSIAN PICTURE OF
THE WORLD**

Belgorod National Research University

Results of analysis of drinks denominations system, associative field of stimulus “drinks” and representation means of the concept “drinks” interpretational field are provided here in their part concerning vodka and beer. Materials obtained with using of empirical methods cover several age-gender groups of Russians. The important but not the key role of vodka and beer in contemporary Russian picture of the world is revealed. It is shown that they are not considered by respondents as prototypical representatives of the whole class of drinks.

Keywords: drinks, vodka, beer, concept, picture of the world, associative field, interpretational field

Vodka and beer have been the subject of different researches—historical, culturological, anthropological, cross-cultural, sociolinguistic (e.g. [1; 2; 3; 6; 8]). Within the last-mentioned scope these drinks are notable for their particular place in the national linguistic picture of the world. Such a peculiarity derives from an ethno-specific / supranational ratio.

On the one hand beer is a drink that is general for many nations and different civilizations [1]. On the other hand many countries have been thoroughly developing their own folk “schools” of beer brewing considering them national or local specialities, and promoting them in this vein. Vodka, being a typical representative of a large group of distilled beverages unified on the basis of rather common production technology, is primarily widespread within the so-called “vodka belt” [7], and its world propagation is far from over. But in spite of its prevalence and infiltration in the culture of the Western world [9] it remains considered originally Russian (it worth to be mentioned that we can find the similar situation in case of other national

liquors—Mexican tequila, Italian grappa, French cognac, etc.).

Such a peculiarity is manifested at linguistic level. Beer—being a supranational phenomenon that is treated as an integral part of ethno-specific culture nevertheless—has its particular denominations in different languages. As regards vodka, the original denomination of this ethno-specific drink—becoming with the lapse of time somewhat supranational—still remains in other languages as a loanword.

Within the frame of our research of different means representing the “drink” concept in different languages (e.g. [4]) we have revealed a particular role of vodka and beer in the contemporary Russian picture of the world (e.g. [5]). The present paper deals with results of our empirical research which concern exclusively the verbal representation of these two drinks.

The above-mentioned research involves the examination of the following conceptual constituents (through different means of their verbalization) using the following methods:

- 1) notional (system of denominations of drinks)—questionnaire survey;
- 2) relational (associative field)—free association experiment;
- 3) regulative (interpretational field, i.e. proverbs and sayings, different precedential utterances, anti-proverbs)—questionnaire survey;

1. Vodka and beer in age-gender systems of denominations of drinks.

170 respondents were invited to write down all the denominations of drinks they could remember within 3 minutes. The results concerning vodka and beer are shown in Table 1.

Table 1

Vodka and beer in group systems of denominations of drinks

Indices		Respondents' age,		13-15		16-17		19-20	
		sex,		<i>f.</i>	<i>m.</i>	<i>f.</i>	<i>m.</i>	<i>f.</i>	<i>m.</i>
		number		20	20	20	10	50	50
“vodka”	denominations in cluster	1	2	1	3	2	10		
	cluster share (in types),%	1.0	1.7	1.2	5.6	1.3	5.8		
	cluster share (in tokens),%	4.2	3.8	1.6	5.8	3.9	5.9		

	“vodka”: share in tokens,%	4.2	3.2	1.6	4.4	3.7	3.7
	“vodka”: frequency rating	II	III	XI	III	V	II
“beer”	denominations in cluster	4	13	1	1	2	21
	cluster share (in types),%	4.1	10.7	1.2	1.9	1.3	12.3
	cluster share (in tokens),%	5.7	7.3	3.9	4.4	3.2	8.2
	“beer”: share in tokens,%	4.2	3.5	3.9	4.4	3.0	3.7
	“beer”: frequency rating	II	II	V	III	VII	II
1 st rate denomination (frequency)	juice	Fanta	coffee	coffee, tea	juice	coffee, tea	

2. *Vodka and beer in age-gender associative fields.*

1) As the first association to the stimulus “napitki (drinks)” occurrences of vodkas and beers mentioning are rather infrequent, even isolated. The free association experiment involved 530 respondents of the following age groups: 1) 13-15 years old (33 female respondents / 27 male ones), 2) 16-18 (56 / 22), 3) 19-20 (50 / 50), 4) 21-25 (130 / 92), 5) 26-60 (60 / 10).

Number of “vodka” and “beer” occurrences did not exceed one token in female subgroups answers, and 2 and 4, respectively, in male ones. Vodka is mentioned not in every subgroup answers and less frequently than beer. Male subgroups answers have the following peculiarities: 1) “beer” rating is higher than “vodka” one; 2) “vodka” and “beer” frequency ratings are higher than in female subgroups answers; 3) “beer” is mentioned in all male subgroups answers as opposed to female ones.

2) As a part of complexes of associations (obtained from all respondents’ associations to the stimulus “napitki” written down within 3 minutes) vodkas and beers denominations show larger presence (see Table 2).

Table 2

Vodka and beer in group complexes of associations

Respondents’ age, sex,	13-15		16-17		19-20	
	<i>f.</i>	<i>m.</i>	<i>f.</i>	<i>m.</i>	<i>f.</i>	<i>m.</i>

Indices	number	33	27	20	10	50	50
“vodka”	associations in cluster	1	1	1	0	1	2
	cluster share (in types),%	0.9	0.8	0.9	—	0.6	1.1
	cluster share (in tokens),%	1.4	2.1	1.1	—	0.8	3.4
	“vodka”: share in tokens, %	1.4	2.1	1.1	—	0.8	3.2
	“vodka”: frequency rating	IX	V	VI	—	XIII	V
“beer”	associations in cluster	1	1	1	2	1	6
	cluster share (in types),%	0.9	0.8	0.9	3.2	0.6	3.2
	cluster share (in tokens),%	1.8	3.3	1.1	3.4	1.7	5.0
	“beer”: share in tokens, %	1.8	3.3	1.1	0	1.7	3.8
	“beer”: frequency rating	VIII	III	VI	—	IX	IV
1 st rate denomination (frequency)	juice	juice, water	juice	green tea	juice	juice	

3. *Vodka and beer in the interpretational field of the concept “drinks”.*

The questionnaire survey involved the following age groups (each of them including equal male / female respondents' numbers): 1) 14-15 years old (40 people), 2) 19-20 (100), 3) 22-25 (40), 4) 30-40 (30).

238 different utterances were collected. Occurrences of vodkas and beers mentioning are rather numerous (see Table 3 and Fig. 1).

Table 3

Utterances with “vodka” and “beer” occurrences (into age-gender subgroups)

	“vodka”	“beer”	“ vodka & beer”
14-15: f/m.	3.1; 2.1 / 10.5; 10.3	6.3; 4.4 / 0	0 / 5.3; 3.5
19-20: f/m.	2.3; 1.2 / 8.8; 7.8	9.3; 4.7 / 19.1; 16.5	4.7; 8.1 / 4.4; 11.7
22-25: f/m.	5.7; 4.4 / 10.8; 8.7	8.6; 11.1 / 10.8; 17.4	2.9; 6.7 / 8.1; 8.7
30-40: f/m.	6; 4.7 / 13.2; 12.3	8; 14.1 / 15.1; 15.4	4; 6.3 / 7.6; 10.8

The first figure in a pair means the percentage of total amount of utterances in an age-gender subgroup's answers; the second one means the percentage of total

amount of occurrences of these utterances.

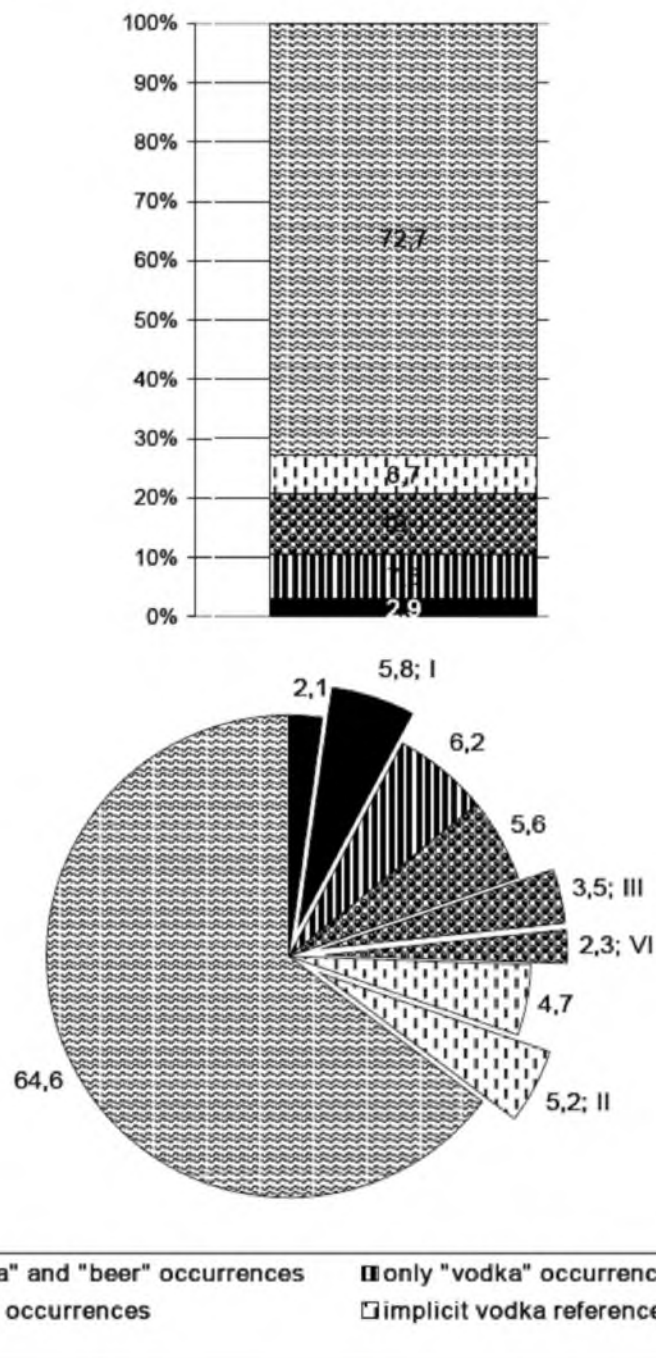


Fig. 1. Interpretational field representatives including vodka and beer references: shares in types (*left*) and tokens (*right*)

Detached segments of the pie chart represent the most frequent utterances

(frequency rating in Roman numerals).

Conclusion

The undertaken study lets us draw the following conclusions:

1) vodka and beer play noticeable but not the principal role in the contemporary Russian picture of the world being not a part of the concept “drinks” kernel that relates to daily consumption nonalcoholic drinks (juice, coffee, tea, sodas);

2) vodka and beer are not prototypical drinks for the Russian linguistic consciousness;

3) examined vodka indices are generally lower than beer ones in almost all asked age-gender groups;

4) examined beer indices are obviously higher in male respondents’ answers than in female ones, so we can deduce that beer is typically “male drink”.

The mentioned features can be traced in all analyzed systems of means verbalizing conceptual constituents under question.

1. In group (age-gender) systems of denominations of drinks vodkas and beers denominations play important but not the key role and being localized from perikernel to far-field zones. Their indices are inferior to ones of above-mentioned daily consumption nonalcoholic drinks. All indices are lower in female respondents’ answers than in male ones. There is a discernible age trend of vodka indices growth in male respondents’ answers.

2. In group (age-gender) associative fields vodkas and beers denominations occurrences are neither numerous nor frequent inferior to ones of daily consumption nonalcoholic drinks. In general, all indices are lower in female respondents’ answers than in male ones, and vodka indices are lower than beer ones. There are age trends of vodka indices fading down in female respondents’ answers, and beer indices stable growth in male respondents’ answers.

3. In the interpretational field of the concept “drinks” references to vodkas and beers are manifold (20.6% of all utterances representing this field in respondents’ answers). However, their majority (71%) being formed with informal, substandard, countercultural utterances—anti-proverbs—such means of verbalization do not

reflect the state of affairs at the level of the *national* picture of the world.

It should be noted in conclusion that the corpora presented here are not sufficiently comprehensive for more detailed patterning. Thus, the present study can be considered as a reasonably appropriate springboard for further research involving analysis of more concept constituents and survey of more respondents.

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