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## **IMAGINARY CHARACTERISTICS OF PSYCHIC STATES MENTAL REPRESENTATIONS IN STUDENTS' LERNING**

*The article presents the results of studying students' mental states situational determination and the features of the figurative characteristics of mental representations during learning process, the characteristics of the structural organization and the dynamics of the figurative characteristics of representations in the time ranges "Past - Present - Future". Respondents are different specialties and profiles students, in general 237 respondents. The research was carried out in the context of the study of mental representations of cognitive states in learning activity. The theoretical basis was the author's concept of the image of a person's mental state. The research used methods of phenomenological description (freely constructed answer), analysis of situations and images of states in these situations, methods of studying the figurative characteristics of states. Imagery characteristics were considered in different time ranges: actual time "here and now", week, month, year in the "past" and "future". As a result of the research it was found that in describing the subjective image of the state, the most common are the ideas about the physical and physiological manifestations of this state, the features of behavior in this state, and also the description of the feelings experienced in this state. Analysis of the structures of state images shows that the structure of images of "simple" states is more "rigid" than in the images of complex states. The images of states are the most coherent and organized in extreme time bands. The least stable connections were founded in the actual time. It is shown that the image of a state is independent of the situation in which it is experienced. It is found that the images of mental states in the time continuum "past-present-future" are characterized by different stability, intensity and content saturation, depending on the level of mental activity and state modality. The most stable in all time ranges are indicators of high levels of mental activity positive states images and negative states of low energy level.*

**Keywords:** *cognitive states, image, consciousness, representation, trait, learning activity, time*

### **Introduction**

The study of mental states that arise in a problem situations associated with solving various problems (from social, life to mathematical and technical) in different types of activities (educational, creative, industrial) led us to the conclusion that it is necessary to identify the states associated with the cognition process and subject cognitive spheres, in general - cognitive states (Prokhorov, 2014, Yusupov, 2014).

Cognitive states are actualized in a problem situation in the interaction between the subject and the object of cognition, stimulating intrapsychic (cognitive) activity, activating a wide spectrum of intellectual manifestations integrated under the action of mental structures in the states functional structure. Thus, an adequate goal of activity is included in the subject's involvement in solving a problem or a problem situation. These states are a common background of cognitive activity, a psychological variable that integrates all levels of cognitive reflection and regulation (Prokhorov, Chernov, Yusupov, 2016).

The emergence of states is associated with subjectively significant situations that can be characterized as unusual, new, uncertain, hypothetical, with activity of higher levels of cognitive reflection and regulation - by mental structures (semantic, reflexive, categorical, experiences, mental experiences, etc.), and components of the self-system.

Cognitive states affect the dimensionality (cognitive complexity) of mental structures, including the subjective (mental) experience, thereby contributing to their multidimensionality, representativeness, providing the regulatory properties of these structures. Due to the states integrating function, the corresponding "process-substantial" complexes of cognitive states manifestations (cognitive, metacognitive and other processes, subject-personal properties, intellectual abilities, etc.) are fixed and preserved in the subject's mental experience structure (Prokhorov, Yusupov, 2017).

Studying cognitive states' structural and functional organization, we found that the states manifest themselves as functional structures, including subsystems of meta-

cognitive regulation, emotional activation of cognitive activity, intrapsychic activity and emotional-personal regulation of thought processes. Important data have been obtained that allow us to consider that the functions of cognitive states are associated with the actualization of cognitive activity, the development of the cognitive sphere, metacognitive regulation, and with the change in the subject's relationship to objective activity and the society as a whole (Prokhorov, Yusupov, Plokhikh, 2015)

The manifestation of these functions in the mental whole and subject life activity, in our opinion, is determined by the mental regulation of cognitive states: the consciousness semantic structures influence (personal meaning, values, constructs, meanings and orientations, etc.), motivation, reflection, direction, categorical consciousness structures, mental representations which are the parts of knowledge structure, as well as a subjective mental experience of a person whose reproduction in problematic situations life activity is manifested in the actualization of a certain quality cognitive state.

Mental experience, according to the consciousness structural concept of author V.P. Zinchenko, includes the world of ideas, concepts, worldly and scientific knowledge (values) and the world of human values, experiences, emotions and affects (meanings) (Zinchenko, 1991). An essential link in mental regulation is the embodiment of meaning to value. "Staining" with the value meaning leads to meaning peculiar binding (object, subject, situation, etc.) and mental state. These or other values acquire "bias", which is subsequently expressed in the subject state. And we can assume that certain specific mental states are also fixed for certain values (objects, subjects, situations, etc.) during ontogeny and accumulation of life experience: the corresponding nomenclature, a certain sign, modality, intensity, duration, etc., then is as if always in these situations and circumstances, these objects, the same or close personal sense, there may be a certain mental state. Therefore, apparently, it is not accidental that the study of semantic spaces of mental states shows that semantic spaces include "accumulated" experiences traces carried out earlier ("past") activities, behavior, physiological reactions, etc. These are traces of "cohesion" of semantic spaces with objects, situations and circumstances of subject life. In particular, in our studies it has been established that the cognitive state semantic space is characterized by nuclear formation, consisting of intellectual characteristics, near-nuclear layers containing cognitive indicators and layers, including emotional, behavioral, physiological and motivational components, as well as periphery consisting of single associations (Prokhorov, Yusupov, 2017).

The systemically important factor of states actualization is a subjectively significant goal (or useful result) formed under the influence of a constituent mental structures functional complex: activity motives and semantic structures of consciousness, reflection, experiences, categorical structures, representations, subjective (mental) experience and self-system. The latter one determines the

mental structures inclusion and their manifestations in the cognitive states actualization.

### Research Aim

In the context of the presented views, the aim of the research is to study mental representations of students' states figurative characteristics in learning activity.

### Methods

1. During studying the phenomenological characteristics of mental states image, the respondents answered the following questions of the questionnaire: 1) Describe how you will know that you are experiencing this positive / negative state; 2) Describe how you will know that other person has that positive / negative state.

The study involved 47 people. All are senior students.

2. In a mental states situational determination study, students were asked to remind the state of joy that they experienced in five specified situations: 1 - in contact with something beautiful; 2 - when meeting a friend; 3 - during the festival, large-scale event; 4 - win the sports team; 5 - the acquisition of the long-awaited thing.

The sample consisted of 40 respondents. All the students. To study the image of state, the method "Relief of the mental state" was used (Prokhorov, 2014).

3. In the processing of the results, mean values and variance, correlations between state indicators in each time range were calculated (35 correlation matrices 40x40 were analyzed). The analysis of the state images structure was carried out according to the indices proposed by A.V. Karpov (Karpov, 2004; 2006): structure organization (ISO index), structure coherence index (ISC), structure differentiation index (ISD).

The structure-forming indicators were determined by counting the structural weight of image's each element (the number of significant positive and negative correlations multiplied to the significance factor). The coefficient of state image relations stability-instability was calculated as the ratio of stable relations to the total number of significant relations. Stable connections are relations with coefficients correlation level significance in  $p \leq 0.001$ ; interrelations unstable (flexible) - for  $p \leq 0.05$ .

The sample of the study was made by students of 2-3 courses of humanitarian specialties. In general it is a 57 people.

4. In studying the image of the mental state in the "past-present-future" range, the research methodology was as follows. Subjects were given a task in a free form (self-report) "here and now" to describe their actual state.

In the subsequent meetings, each subject described and measured the mental state relevant to the first day of the study, as it was, the actual state characteristic of the first day, experienced in the past: a week ago, a month ago, a year ago, and how this state would be experienced by him in the future: in a week, in a month, in a year.

Subjects were students of 1-3 courses, all in all 93 people.

The processing of the study results was carried out using the statistical package SPSS 19.0. The time series of

state images indicators: in the past - a week, a month, a year, in the present - here and now, in the future - a week, a month, a year, compared with the use of nonparametric statistics "criterion of signs" (Zaitsev, 1973).

## Results

### 1. Representations of mental states images in learning activity

To the questionnaire: "How do you know that you are experiencing this positive / negative state?" - Answers were received that made it possible to identify the following content components of mental states images. These:

- 1) A description of the physical and physiological state manifestations;
- 2) Idiosyncrasy or behavioral changes;
- 3) Description of the state through feelings or other states;
- 4) The relationship characteristics or of attitude change towards other people;
- 5) Changing the perception of surrounding reality;
- 6) The presence of a state is determined not by internal, but also by external determinants, that is, as a state characteristic, the situation characteristics that caused it or its attendant are given.

Most often, positive mental states content description includes physical and physiological states description (49%), a listing of idiosyncrasy or behavioral changes (49%), and a description of mental state through feelings or other states (60%) are included most often in a meaningful description of positive mental states. When describing the negative mental states signs, behavioral features are often called (64%), and feelings (62%) are also described.

To the question: "How do you know that another person experiences this positive / negative state?" - Answers were received in which the following mental state image components of another person can be distinguished:

1. contact characteristics: it is easy or difficult to

establish contact with him, how he reacts to attempts to enter into communication;

2. A description of behavioral characteristics;
3. A description of the appearance characteristic of this state - the expression of the face, the eye, the nature of the movements;
4. A description of the feelings that "the other" experiences while in a given mental state.

In addition, part of the subjects (19%) noted empathic feeling as a way of another person actual state understanding.

### 2. Life situation and mental state image

To study the relationship between situations and states from the whole variety of mental states, a state of joy was chosen for the study, as it is often experienced in everyday life and learning activity, and can also be caused by a variety of situations. In addition, it is important that this positive state, which minimizes the probability of motivation for the subjects to conceal occurrence.

Students were asked to remind the state of joy that they experienced in five specified situations: 1 - when in contact with something beautiful; 2 - when meeting a friend; 3- during the festival, large-scale event; 4 - win the sports team; 5 - the acquisition of the long-awaited thing.

As the results show, the reliefs of the image of all joy states in five different situations turned out to be almost identical (Fig. 1). Exception - some variations in the indicators of mental processes and behavior. For example, in the structure of mental processes, the greatest discrepancies have come between situations "contact with something beautiful" and "winning the sports team" in "characteristics of representations", "memory" and "thinking" indicators.

It is important to note that the described differences are far from a significant level of significance. This indicates that the spatial organization (structure) of state image is stable, does not change depending on situation.

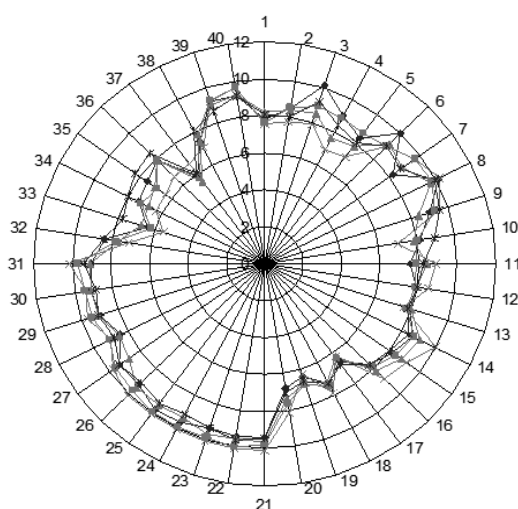


Fig. 1. Relief of a joy state image in a five life situations

#### Symbols:

- "When in contact with something beautiful"
- - - "When meeting a friend"
- · · "During the festival, large-scale event"
- · - · "Win the sports team"
- - - - "The acquisition of the long-awaited thing"

*Characteristics of psychical processes:* (1- Sensation. Sensitivity to external influences; 2- Clearness, awareness of perception; 3 - Features of representations; 4- Memory; 5 - Thinking; 6 - Imagination; 7 - Speech; 8 - Emotional processes; 9 - Willed processes; 10- Attention); *Physiological reactions:* (11- Temperature sensations; 12 - Condition of a muscular tone; 13 - Coordination of movements; 14- Motor activity; 15 - Cardiovascular system; 16 - Manifestations from respiratory organs; 17- Condition of hydrosis; 18- Sensations from a gastrointestinal tract; 19 - Condition of a mucous membrane of an oral cavity; 20 - Coloring of cutaneous coverings); *Characteristics of experiences:* (21- Melancholy-Cheerfulness; 22- Sadness-Optimism; 23 - Grief - enthusiasm (passion,

vehemence); 24 - Passivity-Activity; 25 - Drowsiness-vivacity; 26- Slackness-Alertness (liveliness, nimbleness, vivacity); 27- Experience lowers (immerses) or elevates (ennobles); 28 - Tension - Relaxation; 29- Heaviness (difficulty) - Easiness; 29- Constraint - Relaxedness (freedom)); *Behavior Characteristics*: (31 - Passivity-Activity; 32 - Inconsistence (randomness) - Consequentiality (purposefulness); 33 - Impulsiveness - Regularity (uniformity); 34 - Rashness - Deliberation; 35 - Unmanageability (absence of control) - manageability (control); 36 - Inadequacy (discrepancy) - Adequacy; 37 - Slackness-Tenseness; 38- Instability (unsteadiness) - Stability (stability, steadiness); 39- Indecision (doubt) - Confidence; 40- Closeness (isolation) - Openness).

Respondents assessed how much, in their senses, the each state of joy image was influenced by the situation. It turned out that according to the increasing influence on

the state the first place is occupied by "contact with the something beautiful", the second one - "meeting with a friend", the third one - "the acquisition of a something", the fourth - "winning the team" and the last - "party". In other words, the subjective feeling of the impact of the situation is not supported by objective results: state image maintains its stability regardless of the situation.

**3. Cognitive states images structural organization**

Let's consider the general structural characteristics of states images: coherence indexes (ICS), divergence (IDS) and structure organization (IOS) (Table 6).

Table 6

*The structural characteristics of simple images (mono) and complex (poly) states*

ICS	YA	MA	WA	ACT	IW	IM	IY
POLY	1658	1487	1497	1510	1627	1724	1673
MONO	1893	1833	1586	1420	1721	1932	1651
IDS	YA	MA	WA	ACT	IW	IM	IY
POLY	51	19	16	76	47	21	50
MONO	20	21	83	80	58	18	49
IOS	YA	MA	WA	ACT	IW	IM	IY
POLY	1709	1506	1513	1586	1674	1745	1723
MONO	1913	1854	1669	1500	1779	1950	1700

Symbols: YA – year ago, MA – month ago, WA – Week ago, ACT – actual time, IW – in a week, IM – in a month, IY – in a year.

As follows from the table, the coherence index of mono-states images, in contrast to poly-states, increases in the extreme time ranges - monthly and annual. The same is typical for the indices of organization (ISO). As for the divergence indices, it is the highest in the medium time ranges - weekly and in actual time. Moreover, the divergence index of mono-states is higher than the indices of poly-states.

The results show that the states images are the most structured (coherence, organizational) in extreme time bands. The images structure of "simple" states is more rigidly organized than images of complex states. This is easy to understand because of their structure greater simplicity.

In general, we can note an increase in the organization of the structures of states of high and low levels of mental activity in the dynamics of time and the relative stability of the structure of the equilibrium state - tranquility).

The analysis of intercorrelations made it possible to establish the following. The largest number of correlation links can be traced in states of low energy level, for example, when experiencing fatigue - 77.7%. In these states, the indices closely correlate among themselves within their substructures. Increasing number of relations and

higher level of correlations significance makes state structure more stable.

The state of the average energy level - calmness, has 57.1% of correlations. Correlations do not have a strong focus on any indicators within the structure, correlations of a high level of significance are characteristic only of the experience indicators.

High energy level states. Highly significant correlations in a state of joy are noted for physiological reactions and experiences, in a state of inspiration - of experiences and behavior, in a state of rage (anger) - mental processes and physiological reactions. The number of significant correlations for the state of joy is -53.1%, rage (anger) - 50.7%.

**4. Dynamics of state images in learning activity**

Let's consider the states images in the "past-present-future" range (Fig. 2). As follows from the figure, the images of actual states are described most fully and informatively by the subjects. It is interesting to note that, in terms of content, the time section "a year ago" is also quite fully represented in the subjects' memory, in contrast to, for example, all other sections, including the cut "in a year". The most "filled" descriptions characterize the images of negative states of high and medium level of mental activity (hatred, fear, anger, indifference, expecta-

tion, etc.). For the images of states in the actual time interval, the contents of these descriptions constitute characteristics of behavior, thinking, motivation and reflection.

For "one year ago" – indicators of behavior and experiences.

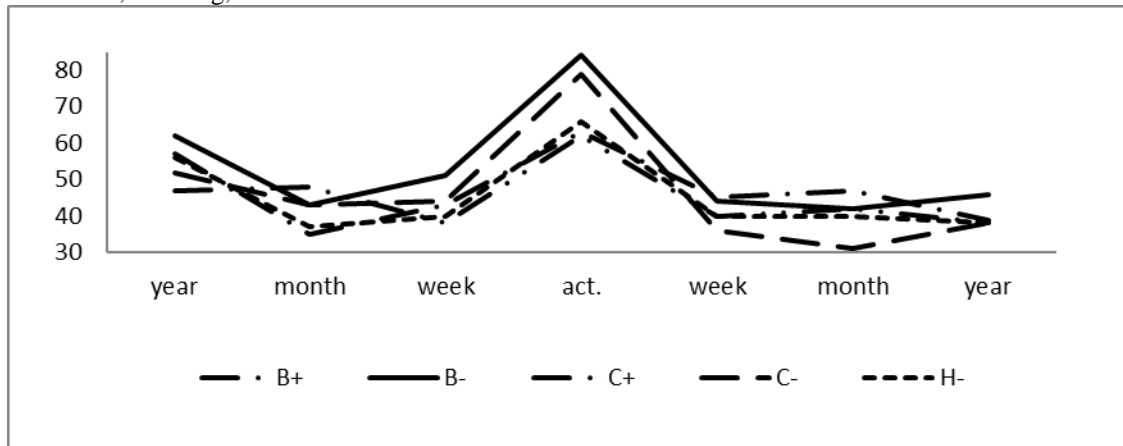


Fig. 2. Characteristics of the mental state image in the time range "past - present - future"

**Symbols:** vertically – intensity value, horizontally – a time span from the sample "a year ago" to the sample "in a year"; on the left: year - a year ago, month – a month ago, week – a week ago, act. – actual time; on the right: week – in a week, month – in a month, year – in a year.

B + – positive states of high level of mental activity; B- – negative states of high mental activity level; C+ – positive states of average mental activity level; C- – negative states of average mental activity level; N- – negative states of low mental activity level.

The study shows that the mental states images of different levels of mental activity and modality in the time continuum "past-present-future" are characterized by different stability, different content saturation and intensity of manifestation. The most stable in all time ranges are opposite in intensity images of positive and negative states of high and low mental activity levels. In general, the highest intensity in all time ranges is inherent in the images of positive states of a high level of mental activity, and the smallest - images of negative states of medium and low mental activity levels. The most meaningfully saturated are the time ranges "actual time" and "one year ago". The intensity and richness of mental states images do not have direct dependence. The states images characteristic of the past are characterized by a low intensity with a high content saturation, while images of future states of time show an inverse relationship: with a tendency to increase in intensity, the lexical saturation of the images decreases. The images of the states in the actual time differ in the richness of the characteristics and in the contentfulness, while in other time ranges the images are less full.

It is established that the variability-stability of the integral image of the mental state according to subjective descriptions (the coefficient of variation of the average value of 18 indices was calculated) is highest at the actual time, in other, relatively short time sections, it decreases and increases somewhat as the time range increases ("a year ago- year ahead").

### Discussions

Studies show that describing the subjective state image, the most common are the ideas about the physical and physiological manifestations of this state, the features

of behavior, as well as a description of the feelings experienced in this state. Significant differences in the component composition of positive and negative mental states have not been identified. The characteristics of the contact, the description of the behavioral characteristics and appearance of the person, the description of the feelings that the other experiences while in this state belong to the components of the other person mental state image.

The images of states are the most structured (coherence, organization) in extreme time bands. The "simple" states images structure is more rigidly organized than images of complex states. An increase in the structures organization of high and low levels of mental activity states in time dynamics has been revealed. In the time continuum, the variation of the images of states coefficients growth is insignificant, i.e. structures remain its stable. A high index of organization testifies to the connectedness of the whole structure, which allows it to preserve the qualitative uniqueness of the state image in time. The stability of the state image structure determines its strength as a whole. The latter is provided by an increase in the number of interconnection relations (complexes of indicators of mental processes, experience, behavior, etc.), high-value correlations, structure-forming indicators, end-to-end invariant relationships that persist in structures at all-time intervals, as well as individual invariants - "through" indicators of the image in different time ranges. In our opinion, the less stable image in the actual time is associated with its potential possibility of change-enrichment, whereas "past and future" time intervals - with its reproduction. Therefore, the states images in these time intervals are characterized by greater stability.

The mental states image, being the result of the accumulated experience of experiencing a certain state, is enriched in the process of life activity. This process is accompanied by an increase in the image structure organization. It is established that the images of mental states during reproduction with increasing time ranges are characterized by a tendency to change while maintaining subjective identification.

### Conclusion

The state image is stable, independent of the situation in which it is experienced, in another words, the state image fits into person subjective experience and is reproduced stably in any situation context of its actualizing. The image content includes physical, physiological and behavioral manifestations, as well as feelings that are characteristic of the experienced state.

The structure of "simple" states images is more "rigidly" organized in comparison with the images of complex ones. The structure of the image indicates its complexity and organization, reflecting the qualitative identi-

ty. The states images are the most coherent and organized in extreme time bands. The least stable among them is in the actual time. It can be assumed that the structure-forming images invariants, together with stable interrelations, amplifying in time, are an integral part of the individual experience of experiencing a state that allows the subject to preserve, aware, recognize, differentiate and reproduce the image in the subject consciousness, as well as in different time contexts and in various life situations.

3. Images of mental states in the time continuum "past-present-future" are characterized by different stability, intensity and content saturation, depending on the level of mental activity and state modality. The most stable in all time ranges are indicators of images of high levels of mental activity positive states and negative states of low energy level.

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#### **ОБРАЗНІ ХАРАКТЕРИСТИКИ МЕНТАЛЬНОСТІ РЕПРЕЗЕНТАЦІЙ ПСИХІЧНИХ СТАНІВ У ПРОЦЕСІ ОСВІТНЬОЇ ДІЯЛЬНОСТІ СТУДЕНТІВ**

У статті представлено результати вивчення ситуативної детермінації психічних станів студентів і особливості образних характеристик ментальних репрезентацій в освітній діяльності, характеристики структурної організації та динаміки образних характеристик репрезентацій в часових діапазонах «минуле - теперішнє - майбутнє». В експерименті взяли участь студенти різних спеціальностей і профілів у кількості 237 осіб. Дослідження здійснювалося в контексті вивчення ментальних репрезентацій пізнавальних станів у навчальній діяльності. Теоретичною основою була авторська концепція образу психічного стану людини. У дослідженні використовувалися методи феноменологічного опису (вільно конструйована відповідь), аналіз ситуацій і образів станів у цих ситуаціях, методики вивчення образних характеристик станів. Образні характеристики розглядалися в різних часових діапазонах: актуальний час «тут і зараз», тиждень, місяць, рік в «минулому» і «майбутньому». Було встановлено, що в описі суб'єктивного образу стану найбільш поширеними є уявлення про фізичні і фізіологічні прояви цього стану, особливості поведінки й опис почуттів у цьому стані. Аналіз структур образів станів показує, що структура образів «простих» станів більш «жорстко» утворена в порівнянні з образами складних. Образи станів найбільш когерентні й організовані в крайніх часових діапазонах. Найменш стійкими є зв'язки в актуальному часі. Показано, що образ стану не залежить від ситуації, в якій він переживається. Виявлено, що образи психічних станів у часовому континуумі «минуле-сьогодення-майбутнє» характеризуються різною стабільністю, інтенсивністю і змістовною насиченістю залежно від рівня психічної активності і модальності станів. Найбільш стабільними в усіх тимчасових діапазонах є показники образів позитивних станів високого рівня психічної активності та негативних станів низького енергетичного рівня.

**Ключові слова:** пізнавальні стани, образ, свідомість, репрезентація, властивість, навчальна діяльність, час.

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