The perception of space and orientation in it are basic human psychical abilities. The designation of spatial relations and their fixation in language are very important. The importance of spatial representations in language is indicated by the fact that the sets of synonymous within them are quite large. In the number of cases the distance in these sets is represented not by separate lexemes but by phraseological units that are rather figurative and expressive and can belong to different styles of language.

The purpose of this research was to establish whether the phraseological nominations with spatial meanings ‘far’ and ‘close’ are consistently arranged in a certain order on the mental spatial map of native speakers of the Russian language. To achieve the results we conducted a psycholinguistic experiment using the gradual etalon method offered by V.Y. Shabes (Shabes 1989). The conducted research allows to draw the following conclusions.

Native speakers show the graduated standard of distances represented through phraseological units. This graduation standard is stable and manifests itself in experiments with different groups of informants conducted by different methods.

In the gradual etalon “far - close” could be underlined zones that are formed by certain means (ways). Only the middle zones are coded through the designation of definite or indefinite distances. The body, its movements and orientations are represented in coding close zones in language, while distant zones are coding through unknown territories and unknown mythological worlds.

*Keywords*: psycholinguistic research, gradual etalon, distance.