



Concept as a basic notion of cognitive linguistics

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ABSTRACT

This article provides a comprehensive overview of the concept and its various types within Cognitive Linguistics. The concept is regarded as one of the key notions in Cognitive Linguistics, Linguoculturology, Linguoconceptology, and other linguistic disciplines within the anthropocentric paradigm.

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Konsept – kognitiv lingvistikaning asosiy tushunchasi sifatida

ANNOTATSIYA

Kalit so'zlar:

“konsept”,

asosiy tushuncha,

kognitiv lingvistika,

lingvokulturologiya,

lingvokonseptologiya,

antropotsentrik paradigma,

eng munozarali masalalar,

tushuncha turlari.

Ushbu maqolada kognitiv lingvistikadagi “konsept”ga oid barcha umumiy ma'lumotlar va kontseptsiya turlari berilgan. Kognitiv tilshunoslik, lingvokulturologiya, lingvokonseptologiya va antropotsentrik paradigmanning boshqa lingvistik fanlarining asosiy tushunchalaridan biri hisoblanadi.

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Концепт как основное понятие когнитивной лингвистики

АННОТАЦИЯ

Ключевые слова:

«концепт», основное понятие, когнитивная лингвистика, лингвокультурология, лингвоконцептология, антропоцентрическая парадигма, наиболее спорные вопросы, типы концепта.

В данной статье представлены общие сведения и виды концепта в когнитивной лингвистике. Концепт считается одним из ключевых понятий когнитивной лингвистики, лингвокультурологии, лингвоконцептологии и других лингвистических дисциплин антропоцентрической парадигмы.

The notion of “concept” is considered to be one of the main notions of Cognitive Linguistics, Linguoculturology, Linguoconceptology, and other linguistic disciplines of the anthropocentric paradigm. Yet, it remains one of the most controversial issues in Cognitive Linguistics. First and foremost, the question that causes a lot of confusion for those involved in the field is understanding the concept. Many definitions exist presented in the works by foreign and Russian scientists such as M. Heidegger, G. Lakoff, G. Picht, G.V. Alefirenko, N.D. Arutyunova, S.A. Askoldov, A.P. Babushkin, G.I. Berestenev, E.S. Kubryakova, D.S. Likhachev, et al., who outline both differences and some common traits of this notion.

There are two approaches to the problem of concept: cognitive and cultural. As E.S.Kubryakova states, the concept is an umbrella term for several scientific directions: first of all for cognitive psychology and cognitive linguistics dealing with thinking and cognition, storing and transferring information, as well as for cultural linguistics, which focuses on the relationships between language and culture (KCKT, 1996).

From the positions of cognitive linguistics “concept” is considered a complex mental unit, a means of representation of knowledge structures, a multifold cognitive structure, and an operational unit of memory (Kubryakova E.S., Demyankov V.Z., Boldirev N.N., Alefirenko N.F., Sternin I.A.). Cognitive linguists argue that concept is a part of our general knowledge about the world, a unit of the conceptual system reflecting human cognitive activity. According to Sh. Safarov's concept is a means of systematizing knowledge in the form of frames, scripts, scenarios, and gestalt.

From the perspectives of linguoculturology “concept” is defined as a basic unit of culture, its core; a mental, cultural, and nationally specific unit characterized by an array of emotional, expressive, and evaluative components; a constituent part of the national conceptosphere (Stepanov Yu.S., Arutyunova N.D., Karasik V.I., Slisshkin G.G., Vorkachyov S.G., Pimenova M.V.).

Despite some differences in approaches, as V.I. Karasik points out, the “linguocultural and cognitive approaches to the notion of the concept are not mutually exclusive: concept as a mental unit in the mind of the individual provides access to the concept sphere of the society, while the cultural concept is a unit of the collective cultural experience; it becomes the cultural property of the individual (Karasik, 2004, p.135). So, a concept is a complex mental entity, a component of the conceptual world picture conceptually relevant either to an individual linguistic personality or the whole linguocultural community.

One of the main problems concerning the notion of “concept” is the differentiation of the terms: concept, notion, and meaning. It should be noted, that:

1) phraseological units: the happy day, the happy event, happy place, not be a happy camper, as happy as a clam, as happy as a clam in butter sauce, as happy as a duck in Arizona, as happy as a pig in clover, as happy as a pig in muck, as happy as a sandboy, as happy as Larry, as happy as the day is long, a few fries short of a Happy Meal, a happy bunny, a happy hunting ground, as happy as a clam at high tide, fat and happy, happy as a lark, happy-go-lucky, many happy returns;

2) proverbs and sayings: Happy is the country which has no history; call no man happy till he dies happy; Happy is the bride that the sun shines on; Happiness is not a horse, you cannot harness it; real happiness is found not in doing the things you like to do, but in liking the things you have to do; Happiness is a form of courage; Happiness multiplies as we divide it with others; The happiness in your pocket, don't spend it all; He who plants a garden plants happiness;

3) quotations and aphorisms: Happiness is like a butterfly; the more you chase it, the more it will elude you, but if you turn your attention to other things, it will come and sit softly on your shoulder (Henry David Thoreau); Happiness comes when you believe in what you are doing, know what you are doing, and love what you are doing (Brian Tracy); The secret of happiness is to admire without desiring (Carl Sandburg); Happiness is a habit - cultivate it (Elbert Hubbard); Happiness cannot be traveled to, owned, earned, or worn. It is the spiritual experience of living every minute with love, grace and gratitude (Denis Waitley); Happiness is like manna; it is to be gathered in grains, and enjoyed every day. It will not keep; it cannot be accumulated; nor have we got to go out of ourselves or into remote places to gather it, since it has rained down from a Heaven, at our very door (Tryon Edwards).

4) texts: a fragment of the text or the entire text (f.e. “The Happy Man” by S.Maugham; “The Happy Prince” by O.Wilde); this issue is the subject of frequent debate, and there are different approaches and views. Not going into detail, we shall give some considerations worked out based on the linguistic literature.

The term “concept” came into linguistic usage from logic, where it is regarded as a synonym of the term “notion”. In modern logic “concept” is defined as «an integral complex of the object's qualities» (Арутюнова, 1998). In the dictionary «Логический Словарь-Справочник» by N.I. Kondakov the word “concept” is not defined: the reference to the “notion” is given instead, which leads to a conclusion that in logic the terms “concept” and “notion” are identical in their meaning.

However, in linguistics, concepts in contrast to notions (a set of the most essential features of an object or phenomenon), are considered to be a more complex and “multi-dimensional semantic formation” (Karasik, 2004, p.71). In other words, the structure of a concept includes the components not found in notions. Moreover, most concepts are marked by the national-cultural specifics. Therefore, not all notions can be regarded as concepts “but only the most complex and important ones, without which it is difficult to imagine the given culture” (Maslova, 2004, p.27).

As for the difference between the notions of “concept” and “meaning”, one of the most acknowledged views is that “the concept is much broader than the lexical meaning” (Аскольдов, 1997). M.V. Pimenova describes the relationship between meaning and concept as follows: “The components of the lexical meaning express only significant

conceptual features, but not in a full measure... The structure of the concept is much more complicated and multifaceted than the lexical meaning of the word” (Пименова, 2004, р. 7). According to N.N. Boldyrev, “meaning is an attempt to give a general idea of the concept, to outline its boundaries, to represent just a part of its characteristics” (Болдырев, 2004, р.26). Z.D. Popova and I.A. Sternin underline the differences of the terms stating that they represent different sides of consciousness and thinking. According to them “meaning and concept are the products of different kinds of consciousness. The concept is a product of human’s cognitive consciousness while meaning represents linguistic consciousness” (Попова, Стернин, 2007, р.92). The scholar claims that the concept includes not only known to everybody meanings of the word but also sociocultural information, and encyclopedic knowledge of the object or phenomenon (Попова, Стернин, 2007, р.99-100).

Another distinctive feature of concept in contrast to “notion” and “meaning” is its interlevel verbalization. In other words, the idea is externalized with the help of various linguistic means referring to different linguistic levels. It can be expressed by words, derivatives, phraseological units, sayings, aphorisms, and even texts. For example, the concept of Happiness is represented by:

1. lexical units: happiness, contentment, pleasure, contentedness, satisfaction, cheerfulness, merriment, joy, joyfulness, joviality, jolliness, glee, gladness, delight, enjoyment, felicity;

2. word-formation units: happily, unhappily, unhappy, unhappy, hippy-happy, dollar-happy, slap-happy, battle-happy, gadget-happy, queue-happy, trigger-happy.

Thus, summarizing the linguistic data concerning the problem of “concept” and its definitions, we can make the following generalizations:

- concept is a multifold cognitive structure, an operational unit of memory;
- concept is a basic unit of processing, keeping, and conveying knowledge and a means of presenting knowledge structures about the surrounding world;
- concept is a social formation; a cultural and nationally specific unit; a fundamental notion of culture;
- concept is a multifold mental structure consisting of notional, image-bearing, and evaluative constituents;
- concept is characterized by a string of emotional, expressive components and associative links;
- concept is a minimal unit of human experience externalized using interlevel linguistic units.

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