

LINGVUOCOGNITIVE AND LINGVUCULTURAL DIMENSIONS OF THE CONCEPT “LIFE” IN MODERN ENGLISH

SOPHIKO CHKOIDZE
THE UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA

ABSTRACT

The article deals with the problem of exploring the specificity of linguo-cognitive and linguocultural dimensions of the concept “Life” in Modern English.

Some integral and differential markers of cognitive linguistics and linguoculturology have been identified.

In the given paper conceptual analysis has been considered to be the most effective way to determine the structure of the concept. The mentioned type of analysis provided: (Barsalou, L. W. (1992). *Frames, concepts, and conceptual fields* in Lehrer A. & Kittay E. F. (eds.) *Frames, fields, and contrasts*. Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum), (Eugene, H. (1996). *Cognitive Linguistics in the Redwoods: The Expansion of a New Paradigm in Linguistics*).

- Determination of the most complete repertoire of the linguistic means, objectifying the concept;
- Adequate description of the semantics of the mentioned linguistic means;
- Cognitive interpretation of the results of the analysis of the semantic space of the concept;
- Representation of the concept as a global mental unit imprinted with national specifics.

Conceptual analysis of the concept “Life” revealed its great significance in the communication of the representatives of the English-speaking culture and its special status in the language system.

Keywords: concept; worldview; cognitive linguistics; linguoculturology; conceptual analysis; componential analysis

Introduction

One of the tasks of modern linguistics is the study of the specificity of the results of cognition in language. This type of research should imply the research of human cognitive activity and should reflect the specificity of lexicological, historical-cultural, economic-geographical, and social data.

Investigating linguistic problems, scientists research human nature, more precisely, emotional and mental spheres, ethical and aesthetic origins, the system of values, world perception and cognition. Humanity's spiritual experience is reflected in language. (Croft, W., Cruse, D.A. (2004). *Cognitive Linguistics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.).

The content of the concept "Life" comprises all the main aspects of human existence. The metaphorical connections of "Life" are determined by associative links. The mentioned fact testifies to the linguistic value of this concept.

Language and the world are constantly changing. New realities change the world, shape the style of our speech, and determine the specificity of our perception of the world. When reflecting the new reality, the results of our perception are objectified in words. New realities influence the vocabulary and enrich it with new associations. (Kearney, M. (1975) *World View Theory and Study*."Annual Review of Anthropology).

The continuity of the associative field of a concept varies in time - new realities shape and transform the continuum of the associative field. We interpret the transformation occurring in the continuum of the associative field of the concept as a continuous reproduction (interpretation and reinterpretation) of reality.

Associations are not stored in human consciousness and memory in isolation from each other. Sometimes the connections between different entities seem paradoxical and contradictory. However, the specificity of the interpretation and reinterpretation of reality by the language speakers is revealed in the paradox and contradiction of the mentioned connections.

In the process of interpretation, we explore the meaning, understand the phenomenon and form an opinion about it. Understanding implies adjusting the opinion formed about the phenomenon, integrating it in the network of knowledge. During interpretation, the new knowledge structures are connected to the existing ones. The mentioned structures create the network of representations of the world and reflect the specificity of the forms of its functioning. (Hiebert, G. (1997). *Conversion and Worldview Transformation*. International Journal of Frontier Missions).

Conceptual analysis of “Life” was based on the study of the specificity of word agreement, which provides the opportunity of exploring the surface expression of the deep associative contours of the name. Through the conceptual analysis, the representations of language and culture carriers were identified. The mentioned representations are “hidden” in the word agreement. They reflect the logical connections of the denotatum and reveal the results of the human’s irrational, emotional and individual perception of the world.

The knowledge about the world is made up of the individual’s own knowledge, which is formed in the course of direct, sensory perception of the surrounding world and from the transmission of the results of scientific and everyday perception of the world by generations.

A person’s worldview is formed during his life, as a result of all his contacts with the world. A person feels, perceives, realizes, and reflects the world. In this process, a person imagines “possible worlds”. Worldviews are nationally determined - speakers of different languages see and segment the world in different ways.

Interpreting the world, a person “removes” from the model of the world everything that he considers to be superfluous and odd. A person restores the lustre to what is “faint” and corrects what is “wrong”. Man perfects the model of the world until it takes an ideal form. In the process of perfecting the model of the world, man also perfects himself.

The idealized model of the world does not comprise all the components and parameters of the object. Only what is needed by humanity is subject to evaluation. It is evaluation that makes a person the vector on which the world is oriented. The idealized model of the world integrates not only what already exists, but also what a person aspires to. (Wierzbicka, A. (1992). *Semantics, culture, and cognition*. Oxford: Oxford University Press), (Long, J. L.(1989). *World View and Meaning in Life*. M. A. Thesis, University of Houston).

The worldview materializes the cultural and philosophical hypostasis of the language. The worldview captures both the national character and the national worldview.

The research proved that it is important to use a complex research methodology for the analysis of the specifics of the worldview. The mentioned type of methodology enables an in-depth analysis of the linguistic objectifiers of the fragment of the worldview.

The integrative approach - the synthesized version of the approaches generated

within the framework of cognitive linguistics and linguoculturology has been applied in the research.

Naturally, the question arises: what unites cognitive linguistics and linguoculturology? - The answer to this question sounds the following way:

- Cognitive linguistics and linguoculturology are developed within the framework of one common thinking space;
- The dyad “language-human being” is relevant for cognitive linguistics and linguoculturology, both operate with an integrative approach;
- Since linguistics is an interdisciplinary field of thought, it is quite natural that it applies both linguistic and non-linguistic methods. Since the interaction of language and culture is carried in the human mind, any linguocultural research represents cognitive research at the same time.

What is the difference between cognitive linguistics and linguoculturology? - The answer to this question sounds the following way: the subject of the study of cognitive linguistics is the cognitive concept, while the subject of the study of linguoculturology being the linguocultural or cultural concept.

In cognitive linguistics, the concept is understood as a unit of memory, mental lexicon, conceptual system and language of the mind (*lingua mentalis*), the unit the worldview imprinted in the human psyche. (F. Sharifian, G. B. Palmer, *International Cognitive Linguistics Conference*, & ebrary, Inc (Eds.)). John Benjamins.).

From the point of view of cognitive linguistics, the concept is localized in consciousness: concepts are complex discrete units of consciousness, with the help of which the human thinking process is carried out. A concept acts as a “repository” of human knowledge.

The difference between cognitive and linguocultural concepts imply the following factors:

- In cognitive linguistics, one language unit corresponds to one concept; In linguoculturology the concept can be objectified and is objectified through a number of linguistic units;
- In cognitive linguistics each word corresponds to its own concept; In linguoculturology the word-identifier of the concept is represented by limited number of culturally significant units;
- In cognitive linguistics special attention is paid to the types of concepts, their systemic organization and relationships. Linguocultural concept is a structure of consciousness, in which typical values for society are represented.

Value is always at the core of the linguocultural concept. Linguoculturology tries to determine the value orientations of society.

The cognitive interpretation of the concept has a certain drawback: with this interpretation, it is quite difficult to separate the concept from other types of mental formations. (Cienki, A. (2007). *Frames, idealized cognitive models, and domains*. The Oxford Handbook of Cognitive Linguistics. New York: Oxford University Press.).

According to the mentioned point of view, a person thinks not in a national language, but by means of the universal subject code of the mind. Concepts represent a kind of “building material”, elements of the thinking process from which complex conceptual pictures are formed.

First, the proposed definition can be applied to the term “notion”. Secondly, we cannot agree with the viewpoint that the national language does not influence a human being’s thinking process, perception of the world and interpretation of reality.

Language does not exist outside culture, just as culture does not exist outside language. The fact that culture is “included” in language is an indisputable fact, because language as a means of communication includes everything related to the cultural-traditional competence of its bearers. The mentioned competence is transmitted from generation to generation through language.

Naturally, people think through the universal subject code, but this does not mean that their national language is “excluded” from the thinking process. (Alexander, Jeffrey C., and Steven Seidman, eds. *Culture and Society: Contemporary Debates*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1990.).

Linguistic categories, to some extent, give direction to the thought in the mind of the speaker. Thus, a concept is not simply a unit of thought imprinted with value markers. In the process of understanding values, linguoculturalists concentrate on the worldview representing values.

When analysing the specifics of the worldview representing values, linguoculturalists rely on the following statements:

- The worldview marked by values includes both general and specific aspects;
- The worldview marked by values is reconstructed in the language in the form of a set of interconnected evaluative judgments, correlating with the fields of law, religion and morality, as well as with typical folklore stories;
- In the worldview marked by values, the important ideas for the given culture, value dominants, the combination of which creates a specific type of culture preserved in the language, are evidenced in the worldview;

- Within the premises of one specific language culture, the worldview is a heterogeneous phenomenon, as different social groups have different values;
- The worldview marked by values exists in both collective and individual consciousness. (Long, J. L.(1989). *World View and Meaning in Life*. M. A. Thesis, University of Houston)

The research is based on the following provisions:

1. Any natural language reflects a specific form of perception and organization (conceptualization) of the world;
2. The meanings in the language are united in a specific integral system and form a collective philosophy;
3. The specific form of conceptualization of reality characteristic of language is partly universal, and partly determined by national specificity;
4. Both in naive and scientific worldviews, a person absorbs all the information through the cognitive system. Thanks to the mentioned system a person realizes the essence and specificity of reality, gains knowledge, forms a point of view and plans his/her actions;
5. There is no full identity between the world discreteness and the reflection of reality in language, although there is a certain correspondence between them, without which language would not be able to perform its communicative function;
6. The presence of certain limits in the material world leads to a certain universalism in the form of linguistic segmentation of reality;
7. The structural peculiarity and content specificity of the nominative field formed around the concept is determined by the status of the concept (dominant/peripheral) in the linguistic worldview constructed by the nation;
8. Defining the concept continuum is possible only through the integration of the units fixed in the dictionary, the texts and the data encoded in the consciousness of the informants;
9. An important component of the concept continuum is the associative dimension of the concept, in which the specificity of the “value marking” of the concept in the consciousness of the nation is evidenced.

Cognitive Linguistics and linguoculturology apply an integrative approach. This is completely justified, since in most cases to obtain objective research data, it is necessary to synthesize the knowledge obtained from different thinking spaces.

Thus, cognitive linguistics and linguoculturology consider both purely linguistic and interdisciplinary research data.

When describing any linguistic research, it is essential to justify the effectiveness of the method applied in it. The effectiveness of the method is determined by the extent to which the research method meets the goal set in the research. (Croft, W., Cruse, D.A. (2004). *Cognitive Linguistics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.).

Implementation of the set goal is related to solving such tasks as:

1. Revealing the linguistic mechanisms of actualization of the concept “life” in English-language texts;
2. Exploring universal and unique (culturally determined) markers of the concept “Life”;
3. Identifying ideas about life in the consciousness of English native speakers;
4. Determining the relevant metaphorical models for the meaning of life;
5. Analysing the meaning of life in lexicographical sources;
6. Defining the repertoire of the relevant phraseological units for the meaning of life.

The goals of the conceptual analysis of the concept are:

- Determination of the most complete composition of the linguistic means, providing objectification of the research concept;
- Full description of the semantics of the mentioned linguistic means;
- Cognitive interpretation of the results of the analysis of the semantic space of the concept “Life”;
- Modelling the content of the concept “Life” as a global mental unit imprinted with national specificity.

Due to its lexical basis, conceptualization is integrated into the terminological system of linguoconceptology. Linguoconceptology is considered to be the continuation of classical, structural and functional semantics. Linguoconceptology is enriched with the data from cultural studies, cognitive science, sociology, history, and other disciplines. Moreover, linguoconceptology is a specific type of semantics, which aims at studying culturally determined elements of the mental lexicon.

The main research methods - componential analysis and field theory - were transferred from structural semantics to linguoconceptology: semantic signs of the concept obtained as a result of the componential analysis are located in different segments of the semantic space - in the core and in the periphery.

However, the difference between semantics and linguoconceptology is evident: the research object of semantics is represented by meaning, while the research object (concept) of linguoconceptology is much broader: it has a “penetrating” charac-

ter and includes the semantics of textual and discourse formations. The semantic features of the mental units are identified in the textual and discourse formations. (Coulson, S. (2001). *Semantic Leaps; Frame – shifting and Conceptual Blending*. Cambridge University Press.).

Linguoconceptual studies are mainly focused on the study of those specific mental units that are imprinted with cultural specificity and have expression in language.

Language is an integral part of culture, as well as a means of acquiring, transmitting, and storing culturally meaningful information. Language can accumulate and convey what has been recorded over the centuries in the form of set word combinations and cognitive models. Therefore, conceptual analysis provides the identification of the archaic knowledge about the world. The analysis of the worldview's fragments is based on the selection of the linguistic units through which concepts are represented.

Since the linguistic worldview, limited by the framework of national culture, reflects the people's worldview, the methodology of the analysis of the concept of a person's inner world comprises the following principles:

- Interpretation of the meanings of the constructions, providing objectification of the markers;
- Identification of the taxonomic marker of frequency, characteristic of many concepts;
- Determination of common typological signs of the concept according to taxonomic markers;
- Generalization of characteristics of the concept;
- Exploration of the conceptual structures, cognitive models, and schemes of the linguistic actualization of the concept in language.

The study of the conceptual structure provides the opportunity of exploring the deeper and more essential features of the subject or phenomenon.

Comprising a complex of signs, the concept has a heterogeneous structure. From this point of view, the lexical level is most informative. It is by concentrating on the mentioned level that it becomes possible to reveal the signs through which the structure of the concept is formed.

In the research, the model of the linguistic expression of the concept "Life" was constructed through the componential analysis of the linguistic objectifiers of the concept.

The performed analysis ensured the segmentation of the meaning into its compo-

nents. The mentioned procedure involves not only revealing the relations between the elements included in a particular meaning, but also identifying the relations between different linguistic units.

The componential analysis revealed the integral connections between the elements, which, in turn, ensured the economy and adequacy of the descriptive system.

Thus, the implementation of the componential analysis provided a detailed, exhaustive, accurate, and specific description of the linguistic objects of the concept.

Results and Discussion

The analysis of the data revealed that the concept “Life” is characterised by:

- Multidimensionality due to the presence of semantically heterogeneous components;
- Ethno-specificity;
- Nominative density due to the variety of means of verbalization;
- Discursive (sociocultural, gender and axiological) variability;
- Centring on the discourse - the ability to perform the function of the initial organizer of the discourse.

The analysis of the results of the actualization of the meaning - the shift from the abstract unit of the dictionary to the speaking individual - revealed the following regularities:

- As the unity of lexical meanings fixed in dictionaries and individual forms realized in speech, the unit “Life” represents the whole cognitive structure, revealed as a result of the analysis of the means of actualizing the meaning;
- Lexicographic sources indicate that life is a fact of existence, a period of time, conditions of life, biography;
- The multiplicity of the concept “Life” manifests the variety of human life. The factor of subjective interpretation is especially important – it is related to the individual perception of the word and subjective attitude to it;
- The continuum of the concept “Life” is much more diverse in the English-speaking culture than in lexicographic sources;
- In the consciousness of English language speakers, the essence of life is determined by the place of residence, living environment, purpose of life;
- English language speakers give a dominant status to work, love, family, home, personal and public life;
- The metaphorical and phraseological continuum associated with the research

concept is quite diverse – metaphors and phraseological units objectify: correlation of money, time and life; Desire for novelties and discoveries; Fullness of life's with surprises and the possibility of doing the unexpected; The need to move forward; People's tendency to make mistakes in life; The difference between reality and perception of reality; Incorrect view on the reality; Probability of unexpected development of the situation in case of mistakes; The need to make efforts to achieve the goal; The alternation of success and failure in a person's life, as well as a person's inability to control his own life; Filling one's own life with important things and events; Alternation of calmness and excitement; Stabilization of the situation after excitement and difficulties; The need to use opportunities; The need to make efforts to achieve a goal; The need for movement, action and change in life; Coexistence of light and dark, positive and negative sides; The need for constant effort to overcome obstacles; The need for hard work and effort to achieve a goal; the need to restore energy; The need to move forward and move towards the goal; The difficulty of being at a crossroads and choosing one of the available roads; The need to anticipate the future and the inability to predict other people's actions; Finding your own place in life; The need for patience and effort to discover the beauty of life; Compliance with moral principles in life and the need to make the right choice; The need to make efforts to maintain relationships; The alternation of competition, winning and losing in life; Perceiving life as a mission; Happiness caused by discovering new things; The need for constant movement; Inability to exercise control over one's life and make choices; Circularity of life - dependence of life stages on each other; Consideration of life as a gift; Coexistence of comedy and tragedy in life; Perceiving life as a temple; The fate of a person's life; The opportunity to gain new knowledge and experience;

- The configuration of the concept "Life" is defined as a result of the analysis of the entire conceptual space;
- The multidimensionality of the concept is indicated by the variety of possibilities for the "agreement" of the element "life" with other elements;
- Not only the assessment but also the social status can be seen in word combinations;
- Attributes include evaluations of a moral-aesthetic nature;
- The personal experience of the individual plays an important role;
- English language native speakers give subjective content to life according to individual factors (age, gender, experience, origin, education, upbringing, profession, social status, faith, physical or spiritual condition, mood). (God-

dard, C., & Wierzbicka, A. (2014). *Words and meanings: lexical semantics across domains, languages, and cultures* (First edition). Oxford University Press.).

Conclusion

The concept “Life” belongs to several core concepts. That is natural, since, from the existential point of view, it is the most significant phenomenon for any person. The universality of life is determined by the unity of the principles of human perception of the world and the similarity of the reflection of perception. This fact determines the formation of universal categories or semantic constants.

The specificity (nuclearity) of the status of the concept “Life” is explained by the following fact: when orienting in the world, a person relies on the principle of his/her own existence (“I am”), and for a person, “being” means, first of all, “being alive”.

The objectifying units (words) of the concept “Life” carry part of human experience. Therefore, it can be assumed that an individual’s vocabulary (lexis) corresponds to the autonomous worldview relevant to his/her linguistic personality. In such a case, any national-linguistic worldview should be viewed as a generalized form of worldviews of the individual-social and linguistic worldviews of all members of a specific ethnos. (Hiebert, G. (1997). *Conversion and Worldview Transformation*. *International Journal of Frontier Missions*).

The concept “Life” actualizes the social-historical practice of a person and the experience of being a human. Life is a multidimensional phenomenon; man has been trying to explain the secret of life for centuries. On the one hand, life is a form of biological existence of all living beings, on the other hand, it is much more than physiology - life is a value of the highest order.

REFERENCES

- Barsalou, L. W. (1992). Frames, concepts, and conceptual fields in Lehrer A. & Kittay E. F. (eds.) *Frames, fields, and contrasts*. Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Cienki, A. (2007). *Frames, idealized cognitive models, and domains*. The Oxford Handbook of Cognitive Linguistics. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Coulson, S. (2001). *Semantic Leaps; Frame – shifting and Conceptual Blending*. Cambridge University Press.
- Erl, A., Nünning, A., Young S. B. (2008). *Cultural Memory Studies. An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook*. Berlin, New York.: Walter de Gruyter.
- Eugene, H. (1996). *Cognitive Linguistics in the Redwoods: The Expansion of a New Paradigm in Linguistics*.
- Fahlman, S. E. (1979). *A system for representing and using real-world knowledge*. – Cambridge (Mass.)
- Fillmore, C. J. (1982). *Frame semantics // LiM ed. Linguistics in the morning calm: Selected papers from the SICOL-1981*. – Seoul: Hanship.
- Goddard, C., & Wierzbicka, A. (2014). *Words and meanings: lexical semantics across domains, languages, and cultures* (First edition). Oxford University Press.
- Grant, J. D., Dagenbach, D. (2000). *Working memory and cognition. American Journal of Psychology*.
- Hiebert, G. (1997). Conversion and Worldview Transformation. *International Journal of Frontier Missions*.
- Lakoff, G. (1988). *Cognitive topology and lexical networks*. San Mateo (CA): Morgan Kaufman.
- Wierzbicka, A. (1985). *Lexicography and conceptual analysis*. Ann Arbor: Karoma.
- Wierzbicka, A. (1992). *Semantics, culture, and cognition*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Wierzbicka, A. (2006). *English: meaning and culture*. Oxford University Press.