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Cognitive conceptual principle in foreign language teaching

Cognitive lingua-cultural approach is quite different from traditional methods of teaching principles. Here we do not stop on a lexical level of words but comprehend the notions through various concept types and structures. Adopting this approach, which is a direction of Cognitive linguistics, we will write about its language features and its basic components. Cognitive Linguistics is a new approach to the study of language which views linguistic knowledge as part of general cognition and thinking; linguistic behavior is not separated from other general cognitive abilities which allow mental processes of reasoning, memory, attention or learning, but understood as an integral part of it. It emerged in the late seventies and early eighties, especially through the work of George Lakoff, one of the founders of generative linguistics.

Keywords: concept, conceptosphere, world picture, cognition, mental process, language picture of the world.

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Когнитивно-концептуальный принцип преподавания иностранному языку

В статье рассматривается теория когнитивно-концептуального принципа преподавания иностранному языку.

Ключевые слова: концепт, концептосфера, картина мира, мышление, языковая картина мира.

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Шетел тілін оқытудың когнитивтік-концептуалды принципі

Мақалада шетел тілін оқытудың когнитивтік-концептуалды принципі теориясы қаралады.

Түйін сөздер: концепт, концептосфера, әлем бейнесі, ойлау, әлемнің тілдік бейнесі.

Language, in cognitive linguistics, is understood as a product of general cognitive abilities. Consequently, a cognitive linguist must be willing to accept what Lakoff [1, 40] calls the ‘cognitive commitment’, that is she/he must be prepared to embrace the link between language and other cognitive faculties because linguistic theory and methodology must be consistent with what is empirically known about cognition, mind and language. The difference between language and other mental processes is not one of kind, but one of degree. Consequently, not only linguistic principles must be investigated in reference to other mental faculties, but also any account of the different levels of linguistic analysis.

Lakoff [1, 52] argues that what distinguishes Cognitive Linguistics most clearly from other approaches to human language is the cognitive commitment, which enjoins linguists to perform their analysis in theoretical terms compatible with other research in the cognitive sciences. Similarly, Langacker [2, 48] argues that languages are best described and explained exclusively in terms of more basic processes of human cognition and communication. This foundational role for general cognition does not preclude the possibility, of course, that acquiring a particular language may lead the people of a particular cultural group to construct the world to some extent in their own individual way. Developmental research has approached the issue

from both of these perspectives, that is, in terms of the cognitive foundations of language acquisition and in terms of the role of language acquisition in shaping cognitive development.

Although Cognitive linguistics is a general framework emerged in the late seventies, it is important to bear in mind two points. Firstly, some of the cognitive assumptions central to this approach are not new. Authors such as Geeraerts (1988), Jakel (1999), Nerlich and Clarke (2001a,b, 2002) and Taylor (1995) have shown that many of the ideas that will be presented in more detail further were already in the minds of earlier philosophers, thinkers and philologists. However, this fact must not be understood as diminishing the originality of Cognitive Linguistics, but quite the opposite. As Jakel [3, 23] convincingly argues:

Scholars of completely different backgrounds have reached the same or very similar results independently of each other, and this fact has to be taken as a confirmation for the validity of the cognitive principles postulated by the approach. Secondly, cognitive Linguistics is not a totally homogenous framework. Ungerer and Schmid (1996) distinguish three main approaches : the Experimental view, the Prominence view, and the Attentional view of language.

The Experimental view pursues a more practical and empirical description of meaning; instead of postulating logical rules and objective definitions based on theoretical considerations, this approach focuses on what might be going on in the minds of speakers when they produce and understand words and sentences. Within this framework, the knowledge and experience human beings have of the things and events that they know well, is transferred to those other objects and events with which they may not be so familiar, and even to abstract concepts.

The Prominence view is based on concepts of profiling and figure/ground segregation, a phenomenon first introduced by the Danish gestalt psychologist Rubin. The prominence principle explains why, when we look at an object in our environment, we single it out as a perceptually prominent figure standing out from the background. This principle can also be applied to the study of language, especially to the study of local relations.

Finally, the Attentional view assumes that what we actually express, reflects those parts of an event which attract our attention. A main concept

in this approach is Fillmore's notion "frame", i.e. an assemblage of the knowledge we have about a certain situation. Event frames are set of conceptual elements and relationships that co-evolve each other and that are shared by speakers. This author shows that certain parts of an event-frame are sometimes brought into the foreground while others are kept in the background. That is to say, we highlight different aspects of a frame based on our cognitive ability to direct our attention. This cognitive process, which Talmy calls the 'windowing of attention', results in different linguistic expressions. A type of event-frame is, for instance, the motion event. It consists of a set of central defining elements such as figure, ground, path, motion, manner, and cause.

Mandler attempted to specify some of the most important conceptualizations that enable human infants to acquire a language. Along with the conceptualization of objects, people must also conceptualize the dynamic and relational aspects of their experience such as animacy, containment, support, and the like. Mandler posited that these more dynamic aspects of infant condition are best characterized in terms of image schemas as investigated by Johnson, Lakoff, Langacker and Talmy. For example, Mandler proposed that people understand a number of different kinds of motion, both animate and inanimate. These image schemas are based in people's Perception of the World, but they are more general and abstract than any particular perceptual; experience; they are conceptualizations that result from a process of "perceptual analysis" in which the commonalities across a number of specific experiences are extracted. Mandler [5, 587] thus proposes that "image schemas provide a level of representation intermediate between perception and language that facilitates the process of language acquisition". Following cognitive linguists still further, she also hypothesizes that such logical relations as if-then derive from these concrete, perceptually based image schemas.

From Popova's and Sternin's view, at least we may speak about the following directions in cognitive linguistics, which have been identified till today: cultural, lingua-cultural, logical, semantic-cognitive, philosophy-semantic. The most important that we are interested in is the lingua-cultural direction which is an investigation of concepts, named language units, as an element in a national lingua-cultural interconnection with its national values and peculiarities. In study of borrowings

from this direction the basic approach is that through study of semantic language units we may go deeper into the people's conceptsphere, as a consequence, it will be easy to define what was important to that or this nation in different periods of its history and what was omitted out of its sight, whereas in another nation it became essential. On the basis of this methodological direction there were developed methods of cognitive lingua-cultural investigation of the language which promote to identify not only national but also group cognitions and its varieties.

Person's cognition is non-verbal, it is realized with the help of universal subject code. People think with the help of concepts, coded by its unit symbols and compiled basis of the universal subject code.

Concept is an equipment of human cognition, it is a global unit of mentation. Regulated aggregate concepts in human cognition form his/her conceptsphere.

E.S.Kubryakova offers the following definition of concept: Concept – is an operating unit of mind, mental lexicon, concept system and mental language, entire Perception of the World, knowledge [12, 90-92].

V.I.Karasik gives several approaches to concepts, developed by several authors:

Concept – idea, including abstract, concrete associative and emotional-evaluating features, moreover pressed history of thought [14, 41-42].

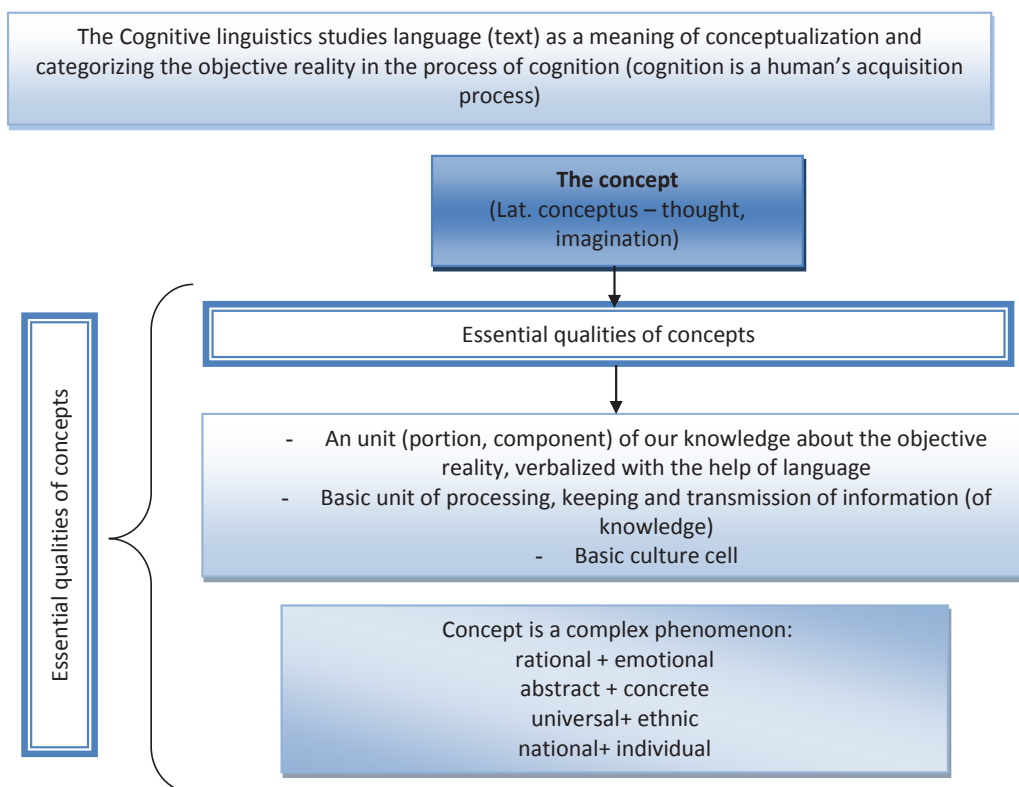
Concept – individual comprehension, interpretation of objective meaning and understanding of meaning as minimum content.

Language is a means of access to human cognition, to his/her conceptsphere, to content and structure of concepts as thinking units. Through language we may study significant part of concept content of cognition.

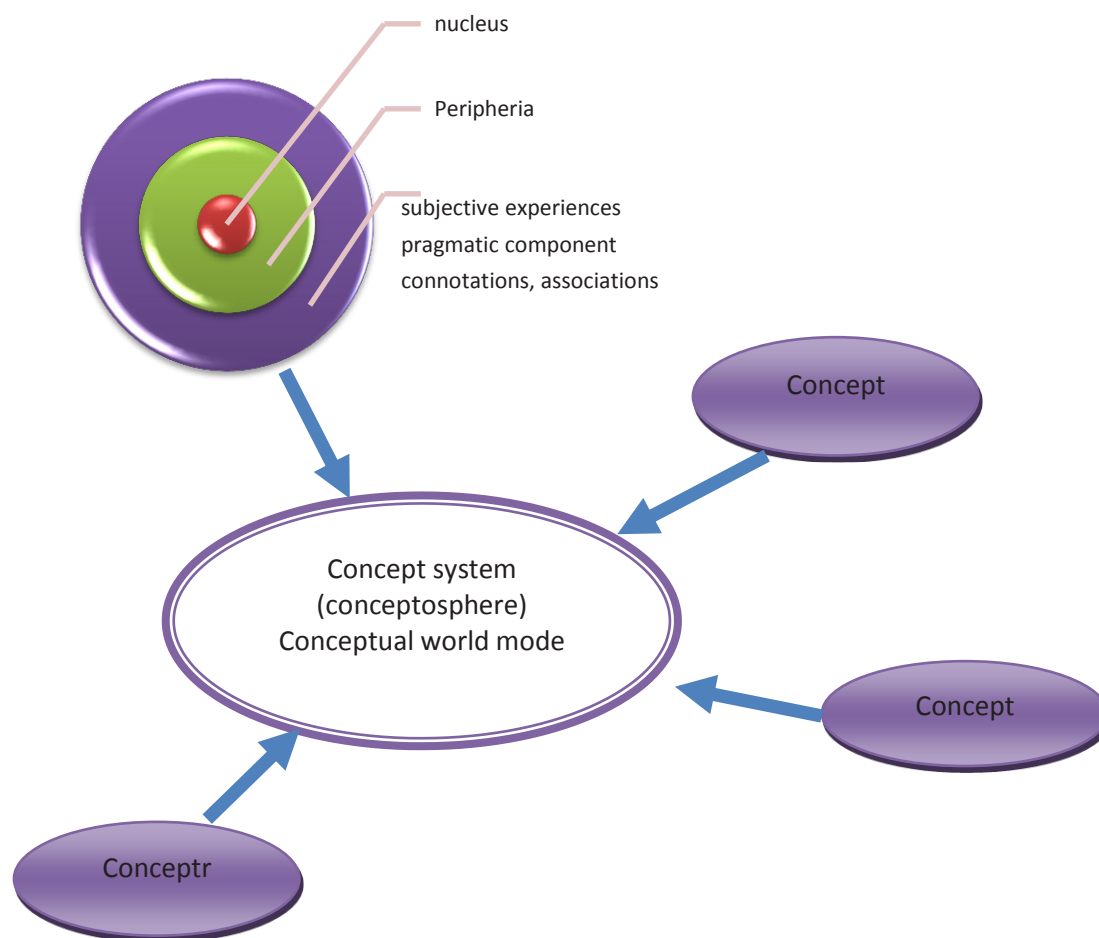
Investigation of semantic language units, established concepts promotes to access the concept content as thinking unit. The understanding of the concept as an operating unit of thought is a way and the result of cognitive qualification and categorization of knowledge. This is because the object of the concept is the mental entity, whose formation is determined by the form of abstraction, and the model of which is specified by the concept, which not only describes the object but also creates it. [6, 67].

Finally, concept is considered to be basic unit of Cognitive lingua-cultural approach:

Concept as a basic notion of Cognitive Linguistics



And: Concepts represent the world in the conscious of people in the form of the concept systems.



Perception of the World

In the past few decades the notion “World mode” has extended to various areas of humanitarian sciences. The notion Perception of the World has pivotal role in the modern sciences. However, it responds a precise definition, especially for linguists and cultural studies. In broad sense, World mode is a regulated aggregate of knowledge about the reality, formed in social (group, individual) cognition [14, 51]. The Cognitive Perception of the World we refer to mental image of reality, which was formed through cognitive conscious of a person or a nation as whole and which is a result of empirical image of reality by sense organs, as well as cognitive reflexive image of reality in the mentation process. Moreover, it is Complex set of language units in the national representation about reality on certain level of national development reflected in language signs – language division, language ordering subjects and phenomena, establishment of sign meaning system information about the world. [3, 54]

Thus, the Cognitive Perception of the World is a set of conceptosphere and stereotypes of conscious which are selected by the culture. Cognitive perception of the World in the individual’s cognition is systematic and has impact on his/her comprehension of surrounding world:

- Offers classification of reality elements
- Offers analysis techniques of reality (explains reasons of phenomena and events, foresees development of phenomena and events and predict consequence of events.);
- Regulates sensual and rational experience of an individual for his/her storing in cognition, mind.

Here exist several types of World mode in cognitive linguistics: National Perception of the World, Language Perception of the World and Art Perception of the World;

National Cognitive Perception of the World represents general, consistent, recurrent in World mode of specific nation representatives. Due to it, National World mode from one hand – somehow

abstract, on the other hand – cognitive-psychological reality revealing in cognition of nation, in his/her behavior – physical and verbal. National Perception of the World is found in the universal behavior of nation in stereotyped situations, in overall imagination of the nation about reality, in utterance of “general views”, in judgment of reality, sayings, proverbs and aphorisms [14, 53].

Art Perception of the World – is a secondary World mode. It appears in cognition of the reader through comprehension of literature. Perception of the World in Art texts is established by language means, but still it reflects individual Perception of the World in the writer’s cognition and is embodied in:

- Selection of fiction units in the content of novel;
- Selection of language means: the usage of certain thematic group language units, the frequency increase or decrease of separate units and their group, individual-author language means and etc.;
- Individual usage of sample means.

In Fiction Perception of the World there can reveal concepts inherent comprehension of the world only of certain author, - an individual concept of the writer. [6, 45]

Language Perception of the World is Complex set of language units in the national representation about reality on certain level of national development reflected in language signs – language division, language ordering subjects and phenomena, establishment of sign meaning system information about the world. [3, 54].

Language Perception of the World significantly represent historical development as it shows condition of acquiring reality, composed through the past periods of language development in society. According to Language Perception of the World we shall keep in mind that notions of a language is what had been and has now the national communicative significance – the nation had been telling about or tell. Communicative significance of language unit is connected with value of expressed concept for nation’s culture [1, 77].

Description of World Mode , described with language signs, gives essential information about Cognitive Perception of the World. However, this information should be studied through certain investigation methods. As named “articulation of world” , which is regularly appearing in connection

with Language Perception of the World, is expressed not in the language reality but through cognitive classifications belonging to Cognitive Perception of the World. Language itself can not articulate reality – it reflects, fixes cognitive articulation, accomplished cognition and fixed conceptosphere of a nation.

Thus, study of Language Perception of the World is appeared in the descriptive system of linguistics. However, in case of cognitive interpretation of results, they can perform as an investigation equipment of the nation’s lingua-cultural studies. So the Language Perception of the World is most appropriate access to the study of conceptosphere.

Significant part of nation conceptosphere is shown in semantic extent of its language, that makes the semantic extent of a language subject of cognitive lingua-cultural approach. Conceptosphere of various nations, as proofs the investigations of semantic extent of various languages, essentially differ as according to concept structure as well as according to their structuring principles. [3, 38]

Language Perception of the World is created by:

- Nominative language means – lexemes, stable nominations, phraseologies;
- Functional language means – selected lexicon and phraseologies for discourse, composed of most frequent communication relevant means of nation in the overall stage cognitive language in a language;
- Figurative language means – national system specialized scheme, directions of connotation meaning.

To sum up, interpretation of achieved results disclose the language cognitive structure is used for modeling and description of conceptosphere, conceptual Perception of the World. In this case, language signs, notions are means for unitary information basis [18, 83]

In order to show adequate modeling and description of conceptosphere of a person we will speak about concept structure and concept typology which will promote to precisely describe concept in person’s Language Perception of the World.

Concept structure and Concept typology

As we previously mentioned, the role of a concept in language and culture, it is best to investigate them according to the structure and typology. Structure of a concept is complex, it differs according to the concept itself. However, after abundance of investigations made by various

linguists we may mention about main three basic structures of a concept:

- Image – essence of an investigation component in a concept explained through neurolinguistic peculiarity of a universal subject code : sensual image encodes a concept by forming a unit of universal subject code. Moreover, presence of an image in concept structure is confirmed by prototype semantics which achieved a significant development in modern linguistics. “Prototype – writes Lakoff – is a most precise and bright images which are capable to submit concept class in general. On the basis of pivotal prototype signs a person carries out classification work, performs knowledge categorization [KCKT, pp54-56]

Sensual image of a concept structure is homogenous. It is formed:

- 1) Perceptive cognitive signs formed in the cognition of native speaker in the representation of environmental reality with the help of sense organs

- 2) Figurative signs which are formed by metaphorical comprehension corresponding to the subject or phenomenon. [Pimenova, 2004, 14-15pp]

So image component in a concept structure consists of two constituents – perceptive image, in the similar level of reflecting image characteristics of conceptualized subject or phenomenon.

- Informational content of a concept includes minimum cognitive peculiarities, defining basic, most distinguishing features of conceptualized subject or phenomenon. These indications are the main essentials for the subject itself for its usage which characterize its pivotal differentiating peculiarities [10]

Informational cognitive indications define essence of a concept. Informational content of most concepts is close to the dictionary content of a key concept.

- Interpretational area of a concept includes cognitive indications which in this or that aspect interpret basic informational content of a concept, flow out it through reflecting some knowledge outcome, or estimate it.

Interpretational area is homogenous, existence of several separated areas is obviously noticed – these areas of Informational area which possess definite inner content unity and close cognitive content interconnection.

Today, linguists have pointed out the following areas:

- 1) Estimating area – combines cognitive features which reflect general evaluation (good/bad), aesthetical (beautiful/ugly), emotional (comfortable/uncomfortable), intellectual (smart/silly).

- 2) Encyclopedic area – combines cognitive features which characterize concept peculiarities, requiring introduction on the experience basis, education and interaction with a concept denotation etc.

- 3) Utilitarian area – combines cognitive features which reflect utilitarian, pragmatic relations of people to concept knowledge denotations.

- 4) Regulative area – combines cognitive features which instruct what to do or not to do in the sphere “covered” by a concept.

- 5) Socio-cultural area – combines cognitive features which reflect connection of a concept with mode of life and nation’s culture: traditions, customs, literature and art.

- 6) Paremiological area – aggregate cognitive peculiarities of a concept which are realized through sayings, proverbs and aphorisms, that is aggregate confirmations and imaginations about phenomenon, reflected by the concept, in national pharemy.

Concept structure includes formed concept basis structure components of various cognitive nature – sensual image, information content and interpretation area, and described as enumeration of cognitive peculiarities, belonging to each of the concept structure component.

To conclude, Language Perception of the World which is the result of cognitive conceptual approach significantly represent language development as it shows condition of acquiring reality, composed through the past periods of language development in society. According to Language Perception of the World we shall keep in mind that notions of a language is what had been and has now the national communicative significance – the nation had been telling about or tell. Moreover, the understanding of the concept as an operating unit of thought is a way and the result of cognitive qualification and categorization of knowledge. As a consequence, communicative significance of language unit is connected with value of expressed concept for nation’s culture.

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